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ABSTRACT

Planned for a K-12 school with 84 students and a full-time instructional staff of 8, including a teaching principal, the North Haven Project for Career Development (North Haven Island, Maine) is described in the context of its small, geographically isolated community. Though offered primarily as a program developed to meet a specific community's needs, the program is presented as one on which other isolated rural schools could build. The setting of the community is detailed, as well as the workings and philosophy of its rural school. The goal of the program is described as an attempt to make a variety of career alternatives real for students, from the option of staying within the community to leaving. General features of a curriculum for small rural schools are given and four modern teaching methods as applied in rural areas are described: role-playing, hands-on activities, use of resource persons, and field trips--all used in conjunction with career education. A major portion of the report is devoted to kindergarten through senior high activity oriented, rural-urban, short- and long-term exchange possibilities to reduce rural students' isolation. The report concludes with a section on the hometown option, including teaching community appreciation, (with "Foxfire"-type suggestions) and skills for hometown living. A four-page list of resources found during the project is included. (RS)

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Schooling in Isolated Communities

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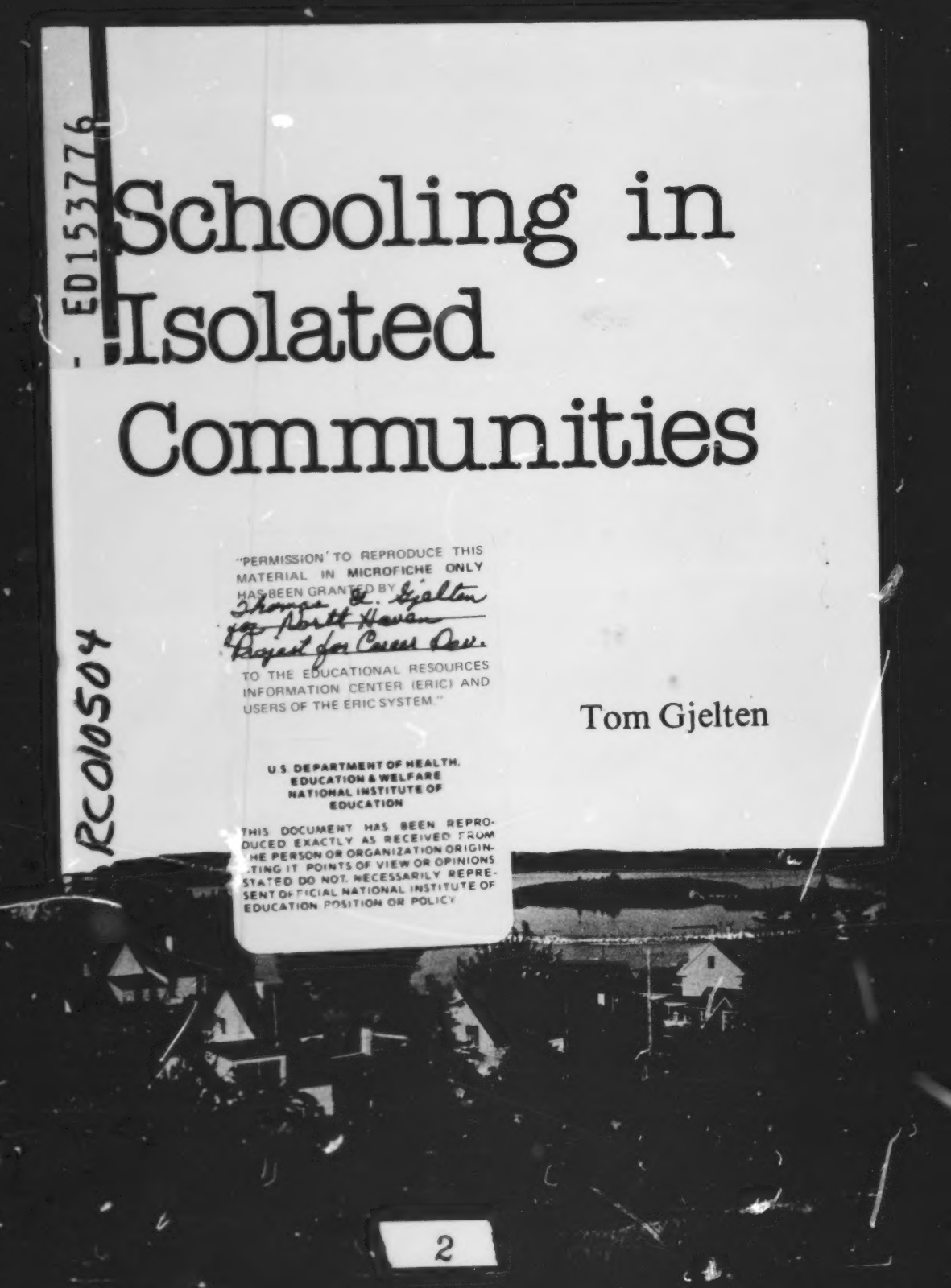

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NORTH HAVEN PROJECT FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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Introduction

North Haven Island is located in Penobscot Bay, offshore from Rockland, Maine. It has a year-round population of about four hundred residents, and a summer population of about a thousand. The island is served by a nine-car ferry running to and from Rockland twice a day, three times daily in the summer. The community maintains its own K-12 school, with a current student population of eighty-four and a full-time instructional staff of eight, including a teaching principal.

What follows is the story of a federal exemplary project at North Haven Community School. For many years people at North Haven have worked to keep their school as special as the community in which it is located. In recent times, teachers' efforts have focused on the unique needs created in students by their upbringing in a community isolated geographically from the rest of the world. We have tried to identify both the advantages and limitations associated with living on an island, and to design a school program which is sensitive to them both. Three years ago these efforts were organized formally into the North Haven Project for Career Development.

Ours was a small project; most of what happens at North Haven takes place on a small scale. But rather than limit the impact that our project might have on other schools, our littleness may make possible a special contribution. Other projects may demonstrate a more detailed career development program, but few can show one in context as clearly as we are able to do. Because the school at North Haven is so small, it can be seen as a whole rather than in parts. We do not lose sight of the large picture: the experience of students and teachers, the role of the program in the school, the role of the school in the community. It is important to see this whole scene, because one of the most characteristic features of the rural experience is the interconnectedness throughout it. To be a successful teacher in a rural community requires integration of personal, cultural, professional, and social dimensions. A report of a program which claims to be successful must suggest the need for that perspective. It must tell the story of the program, as well as describe its official activity.

The Setting

meeting the community

Five years ago my wife and I went to North Haven to teach school. Our decision to move to a place separated from the rest of the world by twelve miles of chilly water was based on two main attractions. One was the opportunity of becoming a part of a real community of people, both in and out of school. The other was the challenge of joining a staff of teachers who had been working for several years to maintain a school which exemplified the strengths of smallness and personality.

Here were people who had chosen a small community-oriented school because they believed in its features, its potential as a system of people and ideas, not administrators and paper forms. From experience we knew that such a positive attitude toward rural schooling was rare. The prevalent view seemed to be that small country schools are characterized by mediocrity and are outclassed in every way by large suburban schools. That view might be accurate in some places, but where it is, it is because those working in the school believe it to be true, rather than because of any inherent weakness in the system.

The positive self-image of the school at North Haven was its greatest strength. While many small, isolated schools were preoccupied with their limitations, North Haven Community School was celebrating its virtues. Its smallness had allowed the establishment of a warm, informal atmosphere. Its isolation had precluded the growth of centralized administrative controls and had given teachers, with the counsel of the local school committee, the opportunity to be responsible for their own school.

As new teachers, we were inspired by that perspective. We soon learned, however, that the effort to establish a good school at North Haven was far from finished. We began to see the hardships and the special struggles experienced in an isolated community. We discovered that teaching on a little island could be as tough as teaching anywhere, with its own problems to balance its obvious blessings: teachers are in a conspicuous position in the community, and while the attention is enjoyable, the lack of privacy may lead to feelings of vulnerability; the personalized atmosphere at school meant everyone was more affected by the pendular swing of morale; the lack of materials and facilities encountered by all small schools was often frustrating; and our separation from other schools and other teachers made it easier for us to lose perspective on our work.

Our idealism was blended with persevering realism. We realized that rather than attempt to demonstrate a shining example for schools everywhere, North Haven teachers were concentrating on the more practical goal of establishing a model of schooling which made sense specifically for North Haven. The staff's conviction that North Haven was a special case made us reluctant to accept the customary criteria by which schools are judged — standardized test scores, the size of our library, or the percentage of graduates going on to college. Our own goal was to identify the particular needs of the people we served and be responsive to them. But what were they?

* * * * * *

Frequently, after finishing a day's work at the school, my wife and I would drive "downstreet" to stop at the general store for a few items. The excuse could be slight, because our real reason was to check in for a few minutes at the center of island activity before we headed back to our farmhouse for the night. There would always be a cluster of young people gathered around their cars in the parking lot adjacent to the store and the ferry terminal, waiting for the return of the last boat from the mainland. The arrival of that boat was, in their words, "the big event of the day," in a community where a typical day was filled with many little events but few big ones. We sometimes joined them, casually seeking in the disembarking throng of people and packages some hint of the world at the other end of the ferry run.

The focus of attention on the boat — the only connection between North Haven and the mainland twelve miles away — was consistent with the island youth's intense interest in the ways of the outside world. An upbringing in a community as familiar and comfortable as North Haven has given island youth a feeling of rootedness which is uncommon among American youth today. Yet their exposure to the larger world through television, the Top Forty, teachers, summer visitors, and various school programs has sowed a restlessness among them, an urge to explore other places.

There are not many New England communities whose geographic location is as unique as North Haven's. There are, however, many rural towns in which the experience of isolation is familiar: on one hand, it has given youth a deep feeling for their hometown; on the other, it has kept them separated from the rest of the world, and left them unsure of their place in it.

Among the common features of isolated communities, ironically, is a deep belief in their own singularity. A North Haven teacher may, for example, be describing an interesting event that happened in another town. At least one person would probably interject, "Yeah, but this is North Haven." This syndrome was by no means limited to students. As a teacher, I was convinced of it many times myself. No two communities are alike, which is part of what makes them interesting. It is important for members of a community to regard their town as special, though they need to be careful that this belief does not lead to defeatist attitudes about their capabilities. In fact, what distinguishes these communities distinguishes them more from society in general than from other such communities.

But what makes an isolated community? From what is it isolated, since when has it been isolated, and, most importantly, so what?

North Haven has, of course, always been an island. But it has not always been isolated, at least not in the way it is now. At one time the United States was a nation of communities. Most people lived in the country and were part of a community of people. Even those that lived in cities were grouped in small communities within the city. Each had its own tradition and cultural charac-

ter. The individual who left his community never to return was the exception rather than the rule.

We are no longer such a country. There are still communities, but for most Americans the sense of identity that came from belonging to a community has been lost. In its place is a feeling of membership in a broader tradition — regional or national. The heritage of this great tradition — its history, its customs, its ideology — has, to a large extent, replaced the heritage of the little tradition, which was defined locally. The person growing up in a traditional community often aspired to the ideal defined by that group of people: in a fishing community, to be a successful fisherman; in a farming community, to be a rugged and prosperous farmer. The ideals to which most youngsters aspire today are influenced by a wider culture, most notably by television. People are transient today, switching communities frequently to advance themselves according to their own ambitions.

People living in remote rural communities are more isolated now because there is more to be isolated from. As our national culture has become more centralized, more urbanized, and more important in our daily life, separation from it has become more significant.

The way students perceive their isolation from "cities" is interesting. One day I was telling my class about the town in Iowa where I grew up, describing it as a small town. "Did it have a shoe store?" one boy interrupted. I thought for a minute and recalled that it did. "Then it wasn't a small town," the boy corrected me. For him, that feature was what separated small towns from cities.

The community experience

The geographic isolation of a place like North Haven has two fundamental consequences:

(1) It preserves intact an authentic community, at a time when most of them are disappearing;

(2) It keeps those who grow up there removed from the direct experience of a broader way of life and tradition.

The traditional community is a vanishing phenomenon. The connections between many rural towns and large urban centers are so smoothly established that movement and communication between them have become routine. It is increasingly common for people to live in one town, work in another, and perhaps shop or attend church in a third. A major factor in the dismantling of rural communities has been the consolidation movement in education. To remove the school from a small community is to rip out its heart. Only in remote towns have the centralization of economic activity and the consolidation of schooling been considered impractical and never carried out. Consequently, only there does one still find the self-reliant, self-contained social system that is a classic community.

What are the characteristics of a genuine community?

1. A strong sense of "family". As a student in North Haven said, "This place is like one big home." People take of each other. Ones own family relations are the focus of ones social life, and the extended families are interwoven in a pattern of ties that make up the social fabric of the community.

2. The personalization of all social, political, and commercial relations. Contacts which are more formal in an urban area — consumer/producer, employer/employee, merchant/customer, public official/private citizen, or teacher/parent — are, in a small

community, basically between people who know each other. The consequence is that the personal relationship is more important than the formal relationship: procedures may take into account special circumstances, credit may be extended to people in need, rules may be bent. The community is a group of people, not roles, and problems are worked out on an interpersonal level. This aspect of life in small communities is one of the things which make them so attractive.

3. Interdependence. Economic activity in a small community like North Haven is not a series of unrelated transactions with separate, independent clients, but a constantly repeating pattern of interrelated business. Ones customer one moment may be ones creditor the next. Each person's fortunes in this network are dependent on the continued balance and health of the whole system. It holds true for social life as well. The people with whom you do business are also the people with whom you socialize, and are in some cases even your relatives.

4. Collective spirit. The feature which distinguishes those communities which are intact from those which are not is vitality. A true community is almost an organism itself, with its own heartbeat and soul, its own personality. Everyone who has membership in the community has within him or her a cell of this larger organism, a part of ones identity which is shared by all others in the group. Even people who have grown up on North Haven and left to reside elsewhere speak, for example, of a "North Haven-ness" which they carry with them wherever they go, and which bonds them permanently to their hometown. It is this sense of membership in a collective spirit — a part of ones identity which is deeply supported when other parts are threatened — that rural youths are so reluctant to risk losing.

Implications for choice

How is it to grow up in such a community? The advantages are obvious: the sense of belonging, the personalized atmosphere, and the strong family support. The community experience is a rich one, and outsiders like teachers should think twice before tampering with it. One of the saddest traits of many rural schools

is their inclination to channel students away from their hometown without sufficient attention to the merits of the place.

But there are problems for rural young people, even in strong communities, and while the school must recognize the beauty of rural life, it must also address its problems. Influences from outside the community are felt constantly, and consequently there is in each rural youth a side of his personality that is independent of the hometown experience, just as there is a part that is shaped by it. A happy and healthy life requires the integration of those two sides in each young person. A problem may exist in that one side — the community-based side — is constantly, deeply supported, while the other side — the worldly side — is hardly supported at all, because the person is physically separated from the source of those influences. The result may be a crisis of values unique to youths in isolated rural communities. In situations where their "community side" is active, youths are comfortable and secure. In situations where their "worldly side" is active, they are often confused and insecure; this side gets much less exercise, though it is just as real.

This value crisis is exacerbated by the national culture's promotion of a cosmopolitan ideal, which may leave them ashamed of their rural origins, feeling backward and unsophisticated. They might infer that to develop their worldly side, they must repudiate their local values and their community identity, and this results in a lowered self-image.

How does the experience of isolation affect making choices about ones future? Wise choices require two things: knowledge of oneself, and knowledge of available options. It is much easier to learn the possibilities of choice than to learn how to choose among them. Teachers are naturally inclined to teach what is most easily learned, and so career education in a rural school begins with expanding children's awareness of the many ways people can make a living in the world. Children growing up in the country do not see the variety of jobs that city children see; consequently, the school must provide a vicarious encounter of them, through career awareness materials and activities.

But what about the first stage of choice — clarification of the values which surround it? Some choices rest in the community and are consistent with local values. Other choices stem from

options outside the community, and are based on values which may have less local support. As long as young people are confused by tensions between those values, their choice process is hampered.

Another problem in this area is that for many rural youths, choosing itself is a relatively new process. It may even have negative connotations. (In **Cora Fry**, Rosellen Brown's poem about a young woman in a rural New England town, the old-fashioned father had a simple, strict warning: "Choice rots the bones like candy rots the teeth."*)

Rural people have a tradition to preserve, and are less frantic about creating novelties. The identification with that tradition makes choosing less frequent. When in doubt, do what has always been done. This is a potential source of conflict between insiders and outsiders in a community. I recall such an occasion at North Haven regarding the cover of the school yearbook. For fifty years it had not changed: a simple drawing of a sailing ship. One year the yearbook advisor suggested a new one might be appropriate. He was overwhelmed by the protest. It was not a matter of choice; the choice had been made long ago. It was no longer theirs to make, just theirs to carry out. That reaction may not be typical, but it does illustrate the hesitation felt by many youths in encountering the need to choose.

What can the school do?

First, it can't do as much as the staff would like to think it can, and perhaps that is fortunate. The school in a place like North Haven will probably never be responsible for either the town's salvation or its downfall: it just isn't allowed that much authority in the community. Unlike most Americans today, many rural people have not yet learned to expect institutions to provide answers to their personal problems. They are proud and self-reliant, preferring to do their own work around their own experience, using their own resources whenever possible. The school in a traditional rural community is given a simple charge: provide an atmosphere for moral training consistent with the parents' own

*Rosellen Brown, *Cora Fry* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1976)

values, and make children competent in the most basic academic skills: arithmetic, reading, spelling, grammar and penmanship. Not much more is expected; an enriched curriculum, relevant mini-courses, or survival skills training are all ideas which come more often from the teachers than from the community. There is a tendency to draw clear lines between the domain of the school and the domain of the community.

A common teacher's complaint is that parents in a traditional rural community don't seem to have that much respect for the value of a formal education. That is probably an accurate observation. Most of the practical skills which rural people use in their daily lives were, after all, not learned in school. Furthermore, they have probably seen many teachers come and go, many innovations introduced and discarded, many grand designs publicized and soon forgotten. Less than complete attention, consequently, is paid to the school by either its students or the parents, and it may have neither the chance to fail nor to succeed.

The lesson of that observation is that teachers in a rural town need to approach their work with humility. Nevertheless, the school does have a responsible role in a remote community. First, it can recognize the profound worth of the community and commit itself to the community's enhancement and preservation. Second, it can help students clarify their values and resolve their ambivalent feelings about the outside world and the choices it holds. This is a delicate task. By its very existence in the community, the school is having an impact on the formation of children's values. That is inevitable, and should be acknowledged, but still kept to a minimum. Its chief task must not be to influence values, but to support them, whether they are based on the local experience or the influence of the outside world.

Without urging particular careers, the school can make the whole variety of alternatives legitimate, from the option of staying within the community to that of striking out on ones own.

* * * * * *

This was the view of our "mission" at North Haven. Our career development project came about as a stimulus for the elaboration of particular teaching strategies consistent with these goals. Our proposal to the state department of education for a grant to support

student activities under the program was accepted, with the understanding that, at its end, we would be willing to describe a program which could be employed in other isolated rural schools.

The extravagant experimentation financed by someone else is something every school ought to experience from time to time. It keeps dreams and imagination alive in the teaching staff — vital in any school. The idea that one school should be chosen to do the dreaming for other schools always troubled us, however. We liked the money, but continually resisted the thought that we were a "model". Our goal was simply to be a good school for the one community we served.

In our discomfort over our exemplary status was contained an essential lesson for us. The responsibility for developing a program which would be useful to other schools was something we needed to accept as natural and reasonable. What bothered us, however, came from a concern which is considerably relevant to other schools: Few things are less consistent with the values of a rural community like North Haven than "putting on airs," presenting oneself to the world as better than the next person. A school which accepts exemplary status runs the risk of a harsh judgment in its own community, a judgment which would repudiate its very example. Schools which become "pioneers" in the development of an innovation get a lot of attention. It is easy for that outside attention and support to become more important than the communication with the people the school serves, inside. We had accepted the responsibility of being a model school, but our primary responsibility had to be to our own community. If we overlooked that commitment, we would not have deserved to be considered "exemplary" any longer.

The first lesson for revitalizing rural schools is that any effort to improve them must begin in the mold of traditions, values, and beliefs in which the school is set. Rural teachers need to be aware of the many innovations which might enrich their instruction, but their top priority must be to get to know their own community.

The activities described in this book are what we chose to do in response to our needs. I make many recommendations for other rural schools, but the first one is that you begin with your own situation, and then trust your judgment more than mine.

The Model

a school to fit the place

When a teacher is faced with a stack of papers to correct, playground duty, a parent conference after school, and the necessity of planning the next day's lessons, thinking about an appropriate design for the whole school is probably the least of concerns. Teaching is always more an active enterprise than it is a reflective one. "Intellectualizing" an experience may be a way of avoiding it, and some teachers will always say that time spent in talking about the whole school would better be spent in individual preparations. I admit the good sense of all that, but it is still important for teachers, particularly in small community schools, to have a broader perspective on their work and their roles.

In a large urban school, each classroom is to an extent a separate arena of instruction, and each teacher an independent agent of education with individual goals and reputation. The organization of teachers into departments and of departments into buildings is more for purposes of management and curricular continuity than to foster teamwork and a sense of a school wide effort. But in rural towns, the school as a whole has a relationship to the community as a whole, and it is essential that the teachers in it be able to function as a group, identifying partly with the school and its image as well as with their own professional performance.

One way to approach this task is for the teachers, with the parents, school committee, and students, to settle on a "model" upon which the school might pattern itself. By "model" I mean

an ideal description of the essential features of the whole system and the rules by which it operates. Such a design provides a framework for evaluation, helping to separate the assessment of individual teachers from the assessment of the whole system, an important distinction.

Establishing a model is to the school what formulating a teaching philosophy might be to the individual — an organization of ones ideas that makes possible the setting of goals and objectives, but also an expression of individuality. For rural schools, suffering from too many comparisons with modern suburban schools, the acceptance and emulation of a model which incorporates uniquely rural features can be a declaration of independence: "We're ok the way we are. We don't have to be like you."

The ideal model for North Haven was the one which was already there and always had been: a small, informal, community-oriented school. Whether things worked well or poorly depended partly on whether the staff accepted those features as natural and good, or resisted the whole system as too unlike a more normal school. Without question, it was unusual, and the urge to imitate convention is strong in institutions. The North Haven school retained its traditional features when other small rural schools were gradually surrendering theirs because North Haven managed to stay quietly out of the way when the movement to make rural schools "modern" was at its peak. Its geographic isolation usually made possible the granting of special exceptions to the various rules and guidelines set up to administer the schools from a central department. Occasionally the school was pressured to get more in line with the rest of Maine, but not much happened. It continued to operate in spite of its tiny population, meager library, limited vocational programs, and lack of a hot lunch program.

As smallness has become fashionable, it is ironic to observe that one school that stayed small through its entire history did so only because it was left alone. Perhaps if all schools were left alone, they would naturally adapt to the needs of their community. Schools will always need state government assistance, but when outside agencies begin to establish their own requirements for schools, the schools more easily lose relevancy in the local community. A correct model should not be created, but allowed to surface.

A school like the one we intended to typify at North Haven would be described by three characteristics: it would be small; it would be a community school; and it would have a forward-looking perspective. The first two features are traditional. The third is a function of our rushing cultural change and the need for positive action to cope with the realities of the contemporary world. There is of course potential contradiction here if those attributes become imbalanced. A school could be so intent on pleasing the community that it loses some of its ability to cope with the demands coming from outside the community; there is also the risk of its becoming so preoccupied with the larger world that it neglects the community it is supposed to serve. But when all three features are in harmony, they would characterize an effective school for a modern rural community.

A tiny school

In most rural areas, smallness is a natural fact which a school must first accept and then turn into an advantage. At North Haven, there were about eighty-five students in kindergarten through grade twelve. Littleness was a constant theme throughout school life. We were not just a small school, but a tiny one. The model we represented is actually most appropriate for schools at our extreme, averaging about ten to fifteen students per grade, although many of its characteristics apply also to larger schools. Some of the crucial features resulting from its size are:

1. **A K-12 organization.** I realize that this tradition is already lost in most systems — a casualty of the consolidation and centralization movement. Only a handful of schools in Maine are still operated on a K-12 basis, and almost all of them are on islands. Yet I believe it is one of the most important features of our model. All students on North Haven attend school in the same building. This allows a continuity of learning and teaching which is disrupted in other systems. One principal supervises the entire school; teachers cross freely between the secondary side and the elementary side to share teaching assignments; curriculum and policy planning is done on a K-12 basis, with all school staff meeting together weekly. There is consequent potential for greater teamwork and the bene-

fits of group process, leadership, and mutual support. Most important, however, is the unity it brings to the schooling experience of children. Although we never formally established family grouping at North Haven, there was always an informal accommodation of family attachments and friendships that crossed wide age lines. The transition from sixth to seventh grade, a traumatic one for many pre-adolescents, is much less frightening for students who only cross from one side of the building to the other, a place they have already visited many times. The first few days of the fall term find many seventh graders passing back and forth between the "little side" and the "big side", practicing the transition, strutting proudly among the little kids they have left behind, also reassuring themselves that the cozy loving feeling of the elementary classroom is still there, and they still have access to it. As seventh graders, they already know their new teachers personally, have in some cases had them already as science or gym teachers or coaches, and are themselves known personally by the teachers. Without the constant need to identify themselves or the frightening task of finding their way around an unfamiliar building, these seventh graders are free to concentrate on the feeling of their beginning as "big kids".

The primary age children go to school with less fear when they know that their big brother or sister is only a few steps away on the other side of the school. The older student who enjoys playing or working with younger kids can arrange "teaching" projects in the lower grades, frequent activity at North Haven with valuable benefits for all involved.

2. Cross-age grouping. This is both a necessary corollary of smallness and a convenience for teaching. When six or seven classroom teachers share the instructional load of the entire thirteen grades, instructional groups will always include students of a fairly wide background of age, ability, and maturity. The important thing is not to see this as a difficulty and look for ways around it, but to see it as a natural and practical arrangement. Groups defined strictly by age are usually more arbitrary than groups which emerge naturally as a result of social or maturational factors, mutual interests, or family affiliations. Individualized instruction is obvious and traditional: the situation encourages it, rather than makes it convenient or unmanageable. Peer teaching becomes a

common, accepted practice occurring to the students without the suggestion of teachers. The younger members of the teaching group know what the older members of the group are learning, and feel comfortable asking them for help. I have heard several veterans of one-room schools describe with pride how they knew everything the eighth graders learned before they themselves reached the eighth grade, because they had heard it recited so many times next to them. Our curriculum is no longer so rigid and unchanging that children know exactly what to expect as they progress through the grades, but they do have a general idea, and that knowledge allows a de-mystification of the world of older kids, and reduces the fear of growing up.

3. **A low student-staff ratio, small classes.** Assembling 40 students who all read at precisely the same level might make sense if schools were factories, and children only had to ride an assembly line, with bits of knowledge being attached to them along the way. It sounds like an efficient process, and large schools concerned with efficiency are likely to group students like that. Small schools cannot. It is simply impossible to gather a large group of students sufficiently alike one another to allow one person to teach them all simultaneously. A town can manage to maintain a small school which is economical, but not by employing fewer teachers. Personalized attention and small teaching groups are traditional and necessary, one of the most attractive features of the tiny school. Teachers of small classes know well what educational researchers have documented: small groups encourage a higher level of individual participation.

4. **Teachers are generalists.** Despite a student-teacher ratio of eleven or twelve to one, the work-teacher ratio is high. A high school teacher may, for example, have all small classes, but he or she would probably be required to teach a wide variety of subjects and forego most or all free periods in a day. Teachers consequently need to be generalists, able to move freely from one academic discipline to another and approach problems and concepts from an integrated perspective. A typical teaching load at North Haven High School included junior/senior English, junior/senior social studies, two reading classes, a crafts elective, a journalism elective, algebra I, and introductory typing, as well as the coaching of the volleyball team. Small schools need teachers who are personally

well-balanced, who regard physical exercise and good nutrition as equally important as skill in language and math. By demanding students to study a widely varied curriculum, we are telling them it is important to be well-rounded, to bring a variety of skills and knowledge into adulthood. Yet too often we establish role models right in school who themselves exemplify highly specialized, one-dimensional lives. By employing teachers to be generalists we are imparting specific skills and knowledge and doing it through persons who themselves demonstrate an integration of those skills. Another advantage of generalist-teachers is that the skills and knowledge taught is less likely to be abstract and formal, more likely to be of practical significance and application.

5. **A broad, basic curriculum.** With teachers as generalists, students also learn to be generalists. The curriculum in a tiny school will provide students with basic skills in all academic areas, with an emphasis on practical applications. Everyone must of necessity learn about the same thing - there is no vocational, pre-college, or general preparatory track. Electives are limited, though attractive. Most students end up selecting the same courses as others in their age and sex group.

6. **Support for independent study.** The drawback of a broad, basic curriculum is that there are few opportunities for advanced study. To counteract that handicap, teachers must concentrate heavily on the skills of independent study and self-directed learning. The only way a math student at North Haven or a similar school could study trigonometry is by arranging individually with a teacher for an independent program.

7. **Shared administrative responsibilities.** Most schools of this size have a teaching principal — someone who has the responsibilities of a principal but retains teaching duties for at least part of the day. This has the effect of bringing the teachers and administration closer; in at least one person, the two sides are bridged. The demands put on an individual by assigning both teaching and administrative duties to him or her, combined with the simpler nature of administrative problems, make team management natural. This does not mean that policy decisions are necessarily made by democracy or consensus. The principal still has the authority and responsibility of leadership and supervision. Some administrative

tasks, however, can be trusted to teachers, such as arranging the class schedule or setting academic policies.

A community school

Towns which are geographically remote are still communities, and that is one of their treasures. The school is a part of that community, and a primary commitment of it must be to the preservation and maintenance of the community. That is a profound challenge and one which does not readily occur to many teachers. Children are, of course, individuals, and teachers must see them as separate persons with separate destinies, but they are also little members of the community, and that aspect — their membership in the community — must also be supported. The net impact of the school must be supportive of the community, as well as of the individual students in the school. The community school has many dimensions to it:

1. **The school belongs to the community.** A rural school is more than just the teachers. The community authorizes the school, validates the staff, and, in the end, owns the school. The teachers serve as workers in the school. They bring it a personal interest in teaching, experience in their job, and assumedly a modicum of skill, but they are working for someone else. Teachers cannot make a community school except by letting go of it, releasing their professional hold on it. The final authority is the community's, represented by the school committee. Unless the teachers can accept that reality and work comfortably with it, they will never have a community school. It is inevitable that teachers will disagree with parents over techniques and philosophy, but the school has to be one with which the community is comfortable, so that parents feel at ease while visiting it. There is little point in the teachers' trying to hide anything from the parents or the school committee. Principals at North Haven have been responsible for preparing a report for each school committee meeting. Traditionally, they have been quite extensive. In preparing mine, I was advised by the superintendent that fewer details were necessary. I kept them anyway; I chose to describe activities going on at the school not because I sought action or approval from the commit-

tee, but in order that they might have a general sense of what was happening in school.

2. The community school may sometimes seem un-professional. Allowing the community final authority for the school without resistance is sometimes hard for teachers, because they have been trained to believe that institutions have all the answers to people's problems, and that professionals, as the people that run the institutions, are the final "experts". Allowing directions to come from outside the institution and from people who themselves are not professionals (the school committee) is acting against inclinations.

In another school system in which I once worked, there was a controversy between a teacher and the chairman of the school board over her teaching techniques. "I don't tell him how to wire a house," she said (he was an electrician). "Why should he tell me how to teach?" There is a point, certainly, in defending ones judgment — based as it usually is on both training and experience — but to equate teaching someone else's children with wiring someone else's house is the height of professional arrogance. The result of convincing people to rely on institutions for solutions to their personal needs — such as raising children — is to make them feel generally helpless. Institutions should instead enable people to become more capable in their personal lives, less dependent on others. To do that, teachers in a community school have to give up their monopoly on teaching, and allow education to be an enterprise which flows out of the whole community, not just out of a certified, accredited school. There are many ways that parents can be involved in decisions traditionally reserved for professionals: formulating a philosophy, hiring staff, and, especially, teaching. The sense of territorial domain in rural schools and communities needs to be diminished. Parents also need to recognize that learning to read can be supported at home as well as in school, that not all the responsibility for a child's academic achievement rests with teachers.

3. Community relations is more than just good P.R. "Community relations" in some schools is treated as more of a necessary evil than a fundamental part of school life. It might be seen as something which must be maintained in order to maintain flexibility in ones professional performance — an appeasement of potentially hostile forces in order to continue doing what's right. It is

often a part of the principal's job, carried out through a P.T.A. organization with tasks such as the raising of money to carpet the school library. In an authentic community school, community relations is the system of communication established between the people serving and the people being served. It is that part of the school program which has as its aim the enhancement of the community. Community relations cannot be separated from the educative function of the school, because community relations cannot be separated from student relations: the students are, after all, young members of the community. At North Haven it often seemed that times when there was tension between the school and the community coincided with times when there was greater tension between the teachers and the kids: on one level, perhaps it was the same tension. Troubles with the community also meant trouble with that part of each youth that belonged to the community. Mostly, community relations at North Haven was the whole network of informal relationships established between teachers and townspeople in and out of school — relations which allowed free and unrestrained discussions of school policies and incidents.

4. School is consistent with the cultural experience of the children. The style of teaching and learning in school needs to be appropriate for the style of living and learning to which the children have become accustomed outside of school. Where all economic and political relations are personalized, as they are in a community like North Haven, it is logical for the school atmosphere to be similarly personalized. We were convinced at North Haven that the relationship which was established between the student and the teacher was the single most important factor in the learning process. A good relationship promotes learning; an unhealthy one discourages it. That factor transcends even the instructor's own mastery of the subject and the imagination with which the lesson is prepared.

5. The school uses the community. A good community school uses its community both as a resource for teaching and as the subject of the curriculum itself. A small rural school has access to natural resources in the woods, in meadows and around ponds, along the shores, and in its own backyard for environmental studies. It has within it many people who have learned crafts and skills and who might share them with school children. It has

businesses and enterprises which are ideal opportunities for seeing concepts and skills learned in school being put to practical application. Moreover, the school can take the initiative of teaching children about the community by sponsoring local history projects, cultural journalism, or community surveys.

6. The community uses the school. Often the school in a rural community is the largest, most comfortable building in town. If the community feels a sense of ownership of its school, it will not hesitate to use the building for other purposes – a meeting place for civic groups, for the historical society, or the garden club. School is not only an eight-to-four operation involving children and teachers, but the center of learning for the whole town. The adult education program is one of the most important components of a rural school system, demonstrating that the school is for everyone. Adult evening classes are often one of the best ways to introduce community members to the school and to the role of teaching in it themselves.

By getting away from the idea that it owns learning, the school can establish a new role as manager of learning. It can supplement its directly instructional role by accommodating non-school learning programs. In many rural communities, the Agricultural Extension Service, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and the community church all have educational programs independent of the school. Rather than keep these programs at arm's length, the community school could actively cooperate with them, coordinating activities between them, and opening its doors to them. Churchworkers can volunteer in the school, the scouts can meet there after school, the 4-H Club can do its publicity through the school system and rely on the school's sponsorship. The local recreation council can use the school's support and cooperation. All these accommodations would be natural in a school oriented above all to its own community.

A forward-looking school

Smallness and community orientation are traditional in rural schools. Rural communities need more than a strong tradition, however, to survive in the modern world. New pressures are con-

stantly bearing on rural people. Citizens must be ready to resist consolidation of their schools, retain local control over their lives, fight business developments which would destroy their community, while at the same time planning how to meet the community's future economic and environmental needs. While maintaining their strong sense of community, rural people must learn how to deal more effectively with the Outside. Straddling both worlds, the school is in a unique position to play a vigorous role. The teachers are some of the few members of the community with considerable experience outside the community. Teachers must learn to trust the community to know what's best in the end, but the members of the community might do well to trust their teachers to prepare the students to cope with the society beyond the town.

1. **The school has a positive self-image.** Familiar with other schools, teachers are best able to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of their little schools and to balance them appropriately. They ought to have respect for their own experience and training, and should not be afraid to offer their perspective and state their opinions of what is best for the youth and the community.

2. **The school is innovative.** This does not mean that the best rural school is the most experimental. Rather, it means that the staff and supporters of the school recognize the unique situation in which they find themselves, and are open to developing new approaches to new problems.

3. **The school is activist.** A good rural school needs to be an energetic place, pursuing federal or state funds to enrich the programs, taking an initiative to make the school more alive, making it an important and conspicuous focus of activity in the town. One of the best things about teaching at North Haven was that we always felt the school was special, had a unique vision, and a sense of direction. It is a motivation that all rural schools need.

4. **The school is a refuge from the community.** This may sound ironic, coming as it does after a description of a community-oriented school. It is not, however, a contradiction, because to provide a refuge from the community does not mean to be subversive of its interests. It means that children need a neutral place at times, a place where there are people who don't see them as "one of those Browns" or "just like Uncle Jack". Just as some of the teachers should come from the community, some should come

from outside the community. It is in the personal relationships that students are able to establish with non-native teachers, away from family and relatives, that they are able to get a fresh start.

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Some features of this North Haven model can be applied directly to other small rural schools; others cannot. It is, I believe, a design upon which other schools could build, but its most important point is that it describes a school for North Haven. The essential lesson of this chapter is not that a rural school should be small, or individualized, or whatever. Rather it is that a school must be designed around the experience of the community of which it is a part. This is an example of a model which makes sense in rural areas, but most importantly it is an example of how a school has adapted to the needs of the people around it.

The Curriculum

key themes

In the debate over the strengths and weaknesses of rural education, the most frequently mentioned problem in small schools is the difficulty of providing an adequate curriculum for students growing up in an increasingly complex world. It is in this area that schools are most vulnerable to suffering by comparison with urban schools.

It is obvious that small community schools (1) cannot employ teachers to teach exclusively in the field of their expertise; (2) cannot offer courses which require expensive equipment and special facilities; (3) cannot afford to keep all textbooks and other curricular materials constantly up to date; (4) cannot offer the wide variety of courses and opportunities for advanced study in a particular area which is available in large schools; and (5) cannot provide special curricular "tracks" for students with different career interests: college preparatory, vocational, or general.

Does this mean that small rural schools must inevitably suffer from these problems, that they never will be able to compete with urban schools in the area of curriculum? Proponents of consolidation would probably say yes. To those of us who believe that the small rural school can potentially be a better system than the large urban one, the answer is no. True, as long as rural schools emulate an urban model of education, rely on curriculum materials written for urban children, and seek to hire the same kind of teachers as urban schools seek, they probably will be second-rate. But rural schools do not need to fashion themselves after urban schools. They have their own model, with its own wonderful strengths.

What's more, an urban school curriculum is not appropriate for the needs of rural students, coming from small communities rather than from cities. Rural schools' curricula are not fated to be inferior, as long as they take advantage of the rich resources of the rural community and relate directly to the experience of rural children. What would such a curriculum entail?

A curriculum for small rural schools

A curriculum suited to the unique needs of remote rural communities would probably include the following general features:

1. **A strong foundation in the teaching of basic skills and essential facts.** There are certain skills which children in our nation must learn to be able to function effectively as adults in today's world, regardless of where they come from and what they hope to become. Among these are

- speaking articulately
- listening attentively
- thinking clearly
- decoding written material (reading)
- comprehending what is read or heard
- writing effectively
- explaining
- expressing creativity
- being careful and accurate
- counting and using numbers
- making computations
- solving problems using numbers and ideas
- coordinating physical movements
- maintaining physical fitness

There is also a general body of knowledge which all children need to learn, including facts about ones body and how it works, the natural environment and the relationship of its parts, and where things are in the world.

There is much more, of course, which must be learned, but beyond this minimum, it begins to vary with circumstance. At this basic level, rural schools do not suffer any handicaps in compari-

son with urban school. Classic teaching methods and simple materials are usually sufficient to accomplish these goals. If anything, teachers in a rural school are perhaps in a better position to convey these skills. Children learn best in the kind of atmosphere which is characteristic of rural classrooms: warm and informal, with constant personal attention, in the company of familiar people, and close to home both physically and socially. Particularly during the elementary years, there should be constant attention to learning these skills and to establishing performance standards which insist upon their mastery.

2. An emphasis on practical skills. In all schools it is important to connect what is learned in school with what is done outside of school. I include this notion as a feature of a special rural curriculum for two reasons. First, practical knowledge is much more highly valued in traditional rural communities than abstract knowledge. For the school to be successful, its program must be consistent with local values, and should convey to students skills and knowledge useful to them in their own experience. Teachers in rural communities soon discover that they have a much easier time communicating material if there is an apparent practical reason for learning it: studying fractions while learning to use the ruler makes sense; doing it because it happens to be the next chapter in the textbook does not.

Second, rural curricula ought to have a highly practical orientation for the simple reason that it is much easier for rural schools to maintain it than it is for large urban schools. The proximity of the small rural school to the world outside the classroom is a natural advantage which should be exploited to its limit. Teachers in city schools separated from the outdoors by three flights of stairs and several bureaucratic forms are justifiably envious of the rural teacher who can lead her class out the back door of her classroom to the school playground bordering on a meadow, a stream, and several acres of woods. The ambitious city teacher can also provide enriching learning experiences outside the building, but problems of transportation and management are often discouraging. The rural teacher, on the other hand, can spontaneously follow up a lesson on measurement by having the students pace off the distance from the school to the Grange Hall down the road, using

several units. People driving by will wave or stop for a friendly word, rather than lean on their horn and curse.

3. **Training in self-directed study and the development of initiative.** Students in large urban schools must learn how to manage the technology of language and science labs, and how to take notes and listen to lectures, because these are characteristics of large-group instruction. Students in rural areas must learn how to gather information on their own, work for extended periods without supervision, and take more responsibility for their own learning because those are the skills which are necessary in a system where instruction is by necessity individualized. These skills are not learned automatically -- they must be taught sequentially -- and the rural curriculum must emphasize the learning of them in the same way it stresses the learning of other academic skills. This emphasis must begin in the early grades and continue into the upper grades, so that by the time a student enters high school, where the teachers are generalists and there is less technology to support learning than in other high schools, he or she will have already learned how to dig deeper into a subject independently.

4. **A focus on the community.** A strong rural curriculum involves teaching students about their community, through their community, for their community. The school is in a position to teach students to appreciate the rich diversity of their community's human and natural resources. Just as it aims to teach them the national heritage, so, too, it must teach students the local heritage — or arrange for it to be taught, as in this case the teachers are often not the experts. The community is also an example and an experience through which one can learn lessons in language arts, social studies, science, crafts, art, and music.

The school in a small rural town must focus on the local world in its curriculum because it is commited to the community and its preservation. Many of the students attending the school will undoubtedly remain in the local community for the rest of their lives. For all those students, there needs to be built into the curriculum a preparation for that possibility. The school is a part of the community, and it has an obligation to serve it.

One of the ways it can best do this is to include in its program a component which, followed to its conclusion, makes students

better equipped for the vocational and civic responsibilities of life in their hometown. Such a component would include considerable background in local history and culture, detailed knowledge of the position of the community in its political and economic relations with the rest of the region and nation, an understanding of the primary issues facing the community in the future, and the preparation of the student to assume a responsible role as an adult citizen.

5. **An orientation to familiarizing students with the outside world.** There is a need for an orientation to the outside world, just as there is a necessity of maintaining a local focus. Both themes have unique significance for rural schools. In an isolated community, youths often develop a tenuous relationship with the larger world. They probably know a lot about other places, but their isolation from them has kept them from experiencing them directly. The result is a feeling of confusion and conflict that may complicate their own development into worldly-wise adults. The rural school's curriculum must include teaching about the larger world, and also provide a structure for experiences which help students to clarify their relationship with the outside world in their own lives. Until they become more familiar with places outside their own community, they will not be certain of the extent to which they are part of it, or the extent to which they are independent of it. It is increasingly important for rural students to be sophisticated about the world beyond their hometown. They can no longer automatically assume there will be a place for them somewhere in their community — the economic situations in many rural towns preclude that guarantee. And for those who do stay in their own town, knowing how to manage relations with people and institutions from outside the community is more necessary than ever before, as our society becomes increasingly complicated and centralized.

6. **Attention to the futures of the students.** Until recent years, schools have given little thought to the experiences facing youth after they leave school. There is a special need for rural schools to accept this responsibility, however, and make career development programs a fundamental theme in their curricula. Rural youths encounter unique dilemmas as they face prospects for their future, most notably the tension between their loyalty to family and

community on the one hand, and their interest in the outside world on the other. The rural school curriculum must provide support for all the options facing youth, making each of them seem legitimate and possible. Students need to have experiences within the curriculum of the school which leave them with a sense of control over their future: a conviction that they are choosing among options with which they are familiar; the confidence to go ahead and choose; and the preparation to follow whatever choice they make to its conclusion.

The invisible curriculum

There are many "lessons" important for rural students to learn which are not mentioned above. They need to know themselves and to develop self-assurance; they need to learn perseverance and the willingness to commit themselves to their life's work; they need to learn to be sensitive to others' feelings and to be considerate of them. This does not mean, however, that between math and reading we should reserve time for a little class in "learning to feel good about ourselves." Identifying an element of learning as vital to an education does not necessarily require us to clear a place in the formal curriculum for the teaching of it; it may, instead, be part of the invisible curriculum of the school.

Notions about our feelings cannot be taught or learned the way math or history lessons are. Public schools are highly structured places of learning, and what is taught in them must be simply and honestly presented. Students have a right to see what we are teaching them. When teachers attempt to establish a formal class centering on self-awareness or even values-clarification, many students are confused, not quite sure what the point of the unit is. It may be wiser for teachers to work toward these lessons through other means, means which fit more easily into a formal school curriculum.

In an "adventure education" program, instructors can set up specific, clear tasks for students to accomplish: climbing a cliff, crossing a ropes course, or handling an open sailing boat with other students. Those are the units of the curriculum of the program; through the process of learning to complete those tasks, students often learn more profound lessons: self-reliance, and the courage

to attempt frightening tasks. The same two dimensions of learning might be apparent in education through a craft apprenticeship. From an instructor, the student learns the art and skill of boat building, for example. In the process, he happens to also learn confidence in himself, pride in his accomplishment, and the willingness to tackle challenging projects.

Most public schools do not have either adventure education or crafts apprenticeships. The point is, however, that the formal curriculum of an institution may be seen as a means through which to teach other lessons. A good math teacher may accomplish the same results as the rock-climbing instructor, using the math assignment as a way of reaching through to the student's feelings about himself or herself. Students can focus on a task they can understand. As they struggle to accomplish it, the discord of their own feelings appears to them as an impediment to the successful performance of that task. A lack of self-confidence, for example, is seen as just that, and it stands in the way. The test — be it climbing a cliff, finishing a detail in carpentry, or managing to complete a frustrating math assignment — provides a moment for the encounter of feelings which interfere with its completion. A practical and immediate reason to overcome a fear makes the process of doing it more natural and easier. The visible curriculum of a school is the set of practical and immediate tasks through which one teaches the invisible curriculum — the management of ones feelings.

Modern Methods

for rurai teaching

There are many teaching traditions in the legacy of small rural schools which were prematurely discarded and now need to be rediscovered and restored to use: individualized instruction, peer-group teaching, and cross-age grouping, for example. A commitment to the best education possible for rural youth today, however, requires much more than a return to the good old days; it must involve the willingness to change, to take responsibility for areas of learning not previously given much heed. It is desperately important for teachers in rural areas to be aware of the new urgencies in the lives of their students: they face an uncertain future, and their communities are encountering crises which threaten their continued existence. While the teaching of the three R's should still be the foundation of the rural school's curriculum, teachers must, in the actual process of teaching regular subjects, work constantly to arrange moments in which the reality of the future becomes clearer and less frightening to their students.

There are teaching techniques which help this process to happen without involving a departure from the standard curriculum — supplying, in fact, a higher motivation to learn which has its payoffs in all areas of students' schoolwork. Four basic techniques are the use of role-playing; hands-on activities, in which students are doing as well as thinking; involvement of resource persons in the classroom coming from outside the school; and taking field trips. These methods, associated with the career education movement,

summarize as well as anything the scope of activities in our exemplary project at North Haven. Our contribution is not the design of these methods, but the adaptation of them in a new setting, and the demonstration that even a tiny school can manage a comprehensive career development orientation through its regular curriculum.

Role-playing

Regardless of the number of filmstrips children see about careers in medicine, aviation, or farming, their idea of working experiences which are not represented locally will be limited by their ability to imagine themselves in those jobs. We felt at North Haven that this was the biggest obstacle in the consideration of

possible career options. Undoubtedly it is a common situation in isolated rural communities, where children are exposed to a restricted range of job models. An important supplement to those materials and activities which are meant to heighten children's awareness of other people and other places is the opportunity for children to **play** in roles unfamiliar to them. The best time for this is during the years when children are most play-oriented — in the primary grades — but role-playing as a teaching technique is valuable to use with any age students.

Children at North Haven have been introduced to role-playing within a few weeks of beginning school. In one corner of the kindergarten-first grade room stood a hat tree. Hanging on the branches were a sailor's hat, an aviator's hat, a pillbox hat, a painter's cap, a football helmet, a construction worker's hardhat, a fireman's hat, a Good Humor man's cap, a nurse's cap, a straw sun hat, a toreador's cap, and several others. By providing a single prop — the hat — the teacher was facilitating endless possibilities of role-playing, as children imagined all sorts of situations which otherwise might not have occurred to them. From the teacher's diary:

> For some reason the construction of trains and boats out of blocks and chairs is an untiring activity for five and six year olds, boys and girls alike. The children in our classroom established the hierarchy of train personnel early in the year: Timmy, in his engineer's hat, always steered the train; Rex or Josh, in a modified firechief's hat, always collected tickets; Stacy sat in the passenger car, hatted in a lady's pillbox; and Jessica tied her hair in a kerchief and reprimanded her naughty doll in the caboose. Occasionally the train fell off the bridge, and the whole crew was consumed by sharks, but Rex found that if he changed his headwear from conductor's hat to sailor's cap, he could construct a boat out of the train components, rescue all the passengers, and continue with the show as before, no lives lost and only the baby doll behaving more unruly. The mere change of a hat saved the day. Rex even had a day of running the train by himself, selling and collecting tickets, stoking the fires, riding in the passenger car, and steering the engine, all by changing hats.
>
> — *Jamie Morehouse*

To provide an opportunity for children to play in different working roles was also our intent when we built a little supermarket/restaurant/playhouse in one corner of the elementary classroom. We originally planned and furnished it as a store, with a cash register, a checkout window, and shelves lined with empty

cartons, cans, and boxes children had brought from home. During free periods, children played store, some as customers selecting groceries for their families, others as clerks, adding up the purchases. It was a popular activity for a while, but as there got to be more and more storekeepers and fewer shoppers, it was evident that something would have to change. The children themselves initiated it, recognizing that their store also made a good restaurant. This scene lasted considerably longer, because there was a greater variety of interesting scenarios to act out, from the truck driver stopping in for a beer after a long day on the road, to the young family out for a special dinner together. All the while, the younger children saw it primarily as a playhouse where they could act out the little family dramas with which they were familiar.

These activities may seem less than significant at first, but when it is remembered that the children live in a community without such places in their routines, these skits may be seen as an important way to explore those places. They are chances to pull together tidbits of recollections of the few times they have been in such a place, or of what they've seen on television. One child might remember one image or conversation, someone else another, and through their interaction they can set up a reality which none of them could quite have imagined on his own. Is it important for them to know what it's like in a restaurant or supermarket? Perhaps not so much, but it is important for them to have the exercise of broadening their world, in any way.

By role-playing a scene, students internalize it more, making it real in their own life. We once invited a local disc jockey to visit school and talk about his life and work. As a special event on the elementary side, we had a little booth set up for him where he could read the news, just as he did on the air. He had brought some news copy with him from the wire services, and he cheerily sat down in the booth, cleared his throat, and launched into his five a.m. routine of news and weather and morning greetings. The voice and words were so familiar to the children — most of whom had heard him every morning at breakfast time — that they giggled with the delight of recognition. That was a real person on their radio! It was a powerful moment, but the lesson was not yet complete. After he was gone, we left the booth in place with a toy microphone and stacks of wire service copy. For days after-

ward, students would take turns sitting in the booth and reading the news aloud into the microphone, with every nuance of the slick DJ. It was not only a great oral reading activity, but a chance for them to imagine themselves in a job they had hardly known existed the week before.

Role-playing is useful in any situation, with any age group, where the subject matter being taught somehow lacks the feel of reality. It was used effectively at North Haven with all ages — older elementary students role-playing a wagon train headed West; junior high students re-enacting a factory scene at the time of child labor disputes; and high school students studying the constitutional convention of 1789.

Hands-on activities

The combination of concrete tasks with role-playing activities is an especially effective teaching technique. Older elementary students helped to build the playhouse at North Haven. In several aspects of the construction — from determining the courses for shingling to computing the length of wood necessary to make a window sash — they had to solve practical problems. The experience of adding fractional numbers in this carpentry project was much more powerful motivation for learning about them than could ever be possible in a textbook. Through such hands-on activities, students realize that there are connections between what they are learning in school and what they need to know in their daily lives. As a follow-up to the playhouse construction, the students visited the site of a house under construction, observing adult workers doing the same tasks they had been doing in school.

Primary students had another kind of hands-on project when they produced their own newspaper. This was not merely a school gossip sheet, but an account of news happening around the town as well. Students played reporters, and went in teams to parts of town looking for news. While at the post office, students learned the postmaster had just gotten a new safe a few days before. While visiting the gas station, the attendant came out and adjusted the pumps to show a higher price per gallon. They returned to school

with these "scoops", and they appeared in print the next day. While some students wrote up the final copy, others worked on a print to stamp their official logo on each issue of the paper. Another group's project was to run the paper off on the school mimeograph machine, collate, and staple it. Newspapers aren't produced without cost, however. Students also tabulated the cost of their little project, including paper, ink, and gas for transportation around town, and decided to charge five cents per copy in order to recover their costs.

Hands-on activities have their place in high school as well as grade school. At North Haven, members of the drafting class, after drawing out plans for a small house according to specifications given them by their instructor, proceeded to build cardboard models of the houses. The plans were the connections between the specifications, which were only numbers, and the final product. One boy went further and drew up rough plans for a small pumphouse at the request of an acquaintance of his who wanted one built. He had his friend approve the plans, and then used them to build the house himself. Doing a project with one's own hands after first having learned about it on an abstract level so deepens a student's involvement in a lesson that it will be remembered long after other lessons are forgotten. If all schoolwork could be experienced so directly, the separation between school and "real life", which so annoys many students, would be much less apparent.

Resource persons

Using resource persons in the classroom means bringing in guests from the community or other places to talk about themselves, their work or hobby, to give a demonstration, to teach students a special craft or skill, or simply to be available to help students in some way that supplements what can be provided by the classroom teacher. At North Haven, having "outside people" in our school was one of the most important parts of our exemplary program.

Each Thursday morning we set aside an assembly period which featured a special appearance or presentation by someone from outside the school. The guests gave a candid vignette of their own

life and work in the world. In the elementary program, the guests were often from the local community, and were already familiar to the students. These assemblies, however, gave them a chance to talk about a specific aspect of their work with which the children might not be familiar. The students were spellbound as they sat listening to a man dressed in full diving gear talking about gathering scallops on the bottom of the ocean in the middle of winter, even though he was also the father of two of the schoolchildren, the coach of the peewee basketball team, and the familiar face at the stamp window in the post office.

In the high school program, people from outside the community were usually featured, talking about experiences not familiar to the students. The intimacy afforded by our tiny size kept these presentations from turning into rather boring career day speeches. We encouraged guests to tell how they got started in their field — to emphasize their personal history. By seeing these guests as people, students were able to believe their stories as honest and realistic and possible — an impression easily lost in a more formal situation. The radio announcer talking about his career eventually told an anecdote about how he got into it: "I was working at Sears and got tired of it. I had always wanted to be a disc jockey, so I called up a fellow I knew at WRKD and asked if there were any openings for announcers. I started work the next day." A Marine sergeant expecting to deliver a traditional high school recruiting presentation found himself talking to small groups of students about his own problems in school and around his town, and what happened to him when he joined the service. Actors coming to demonstrate the staging of a classical sword battle got around to discussing the high rate of unemployment in their profession, and why they are still devoted to it.

The programs usually had little relation to the academic units current in school at the time. Rather than relating to a particular class, these meetings had a continuity of their own, separate from the rest of the educational program. Our main criterion in choosing guests was that they showed enthusiasm in talking about their life and their work, thus conveying to the students that it is possible to take charge of ones life and choose work which is interesting and rewarding. The point of the meetings was not the speech, but the speaker; not the career information, but the pride with which

it was given. We wanted students to react to the guests as people — believable examples of styles of work and living possible in the world.

Thursday Meetings did not begin as a major thrust of our career development program at North Haven, but while other parts of the program sputtered and died, they became more popular. I think that is partly because they were among the activities most perfectly suited to the needs of students in a small, isolated community. First, they were a highly personal event. They were for students fundamentally an experience of a provocative person, not an idea, historical event, or abstract operation. For a community where every aspect of daily routine was highly personalized, they were therefore an ideal educational method. Secondly, almost all guests came from the mainland, representing the outside world with which students had such a tenuous relationship. The meetings were a chance to learn about a place they were curious about, in a way in which they felt comfortable.

When a subject comes up in class study for which there is an expert locally available, it is wise to bring the person in to talk to the students. Because they come from the real world, they are able to verify that what the students are learning is worthwhile. Students are typically asked to take the teacher's word for almost everything; one reason, perhaps, that students do not always give full attention to a class lecture is that there is inevitably something artificial about a teacher's discussing so many different subjects. To students, teachers are people with whom they get to be familiar, people who sometimes become their friends and counselors, sometimes their disciplinarians, people who help them with their schoolwork and advise them on their yearbook, but who, in the end, are just teachers. They are not newspaper reporters or nutritionists or welfare workers, and so students disregard a little of what they are told about journalistic writing, good health, or poverty. When real experts come into class, their word is a little more authoritative. At North Haven, prominent employers in the community were invited in to talk to the career education seminar about their ideas of whom they would like to hire; representatives of the town planning board came in to discuss the future of the community; a banker came in to discuss the management of personal finances; and the state game warden spoke to

members of the hunters' safety class.

A more formal relationship with resource persons in the local community can also be set up. With many demands on teachers, we usually did not have staff available to teach all the courses we wanted to have. Our response was to solicit help from the community. We hired a woman who was a superb seamstress to teach the sewing class. We sent a group of students each week into another woman's home for a cooking class; a retired man took a small group of students each week for golf lessons during fair weather; the coaches of both high school basketball teams were people from the community. All these people, because they had a specific responsibility, were able to focus on it diligently, and undoubtedly did a better job of teaching the subject than an overworked teacher could have managed.

It is not only to lighten the burden on teachers that resource persons are used, however. There are many times when a teaching task could not be done by a regular teacher. Few teachers, for example, are true craftsmen. When instruction in a specific craft is desired, it will probably be necessary to bring a craftsperson into school to teach it. At North Haven we chose to include a short course in boat building in our curriculum. To teach it, we hired a local boat builder. He was able to convey a sense of respect and pride in his craft that a teacher, with dozens of different responsibilities, could not have. It is imperative that students come into contact with such people through their school experience.

Few teachers are artists, either, and a sense of the joy of the creative act is important for rural students to experience. It is becoming more widely recognized that creative self-expression through visual or performing art or writing is not only not a frill, but a fundamental part of human growth and learning. Art is one of the basics in a school curriculum. Teachers can be more supportive of artistic expression, but, again, artists themselves are best able to draw out from students their creative impulse. The federally-funded Artists-in-Schools program has made possible the extensive use of artists in even the remotest of rural schools, and their partnership in the teaching enterprise can go a long way toward making the school curriculum come alive, demonstrating that it can be performed as well as memorized. By making use of the many matching grant programs set up to support the use of

artists, by cooperating with local concert associations, and by charging a small fee to parents invited to participate in performances and workshops, even schools with meager resources can manage to use artists regularly.

Field trips

As a method of teaching, field trips have a special significance for schools in isolated communities. As in other towns, short trips around the community enable a teacher to use local resources and examples in the teaching of a lesson, thereby increasing students' motivation to learn it. They are a valuable instructional technique, and we used them extensively at North Haven. But in schools where barriers of water, woods, farmland, or mountains separate their communities from other places, trips outside of the community become a wholly different matter. Such trips require more planning, are larger scale ventures in terms of time and expense, and probably have more general learning purposes. At North Haven the bulk of our exemplary project budget each year went towards an account for travel expenses; our highest priority was taking the students off-island whenever possible — to visit museums or historical sites, to go mountain climbing or swimming in a YMCA pool, to watch a gymnastics exhibition at another school, to visit a Naval air station, or to walk around a college campus. The primary objective of such trips was simply to add to students' experience a variety of encounters with mainland life. We believed that the smartest way to teach students about the world outside of the community was to get them out into it as much as possible. The experience of schoolchildren in other remote towns is similar; learning about other places cannot be complete until students have a personal idea of what they are like.

Types of field trips

Nature-centered. Teachers do not have to go far to find rich resources for studies in natural science. A blindfolded walk through the woods listening to the sounds, a close exploration of a saltwater marsh, a wade through a stream, or a hands-and-knees exploration of the forest floor are all excellent learning experiences and are

often possible within the immediate vicinity of the school and community.

Quick excursions. Short trips around town are a special delight to younger children. Kindergarten and first-graders at North Haven went to see a calf being born at a local farm, to watch the men who had come over from the mainland with a "cherry picker" trim branches around the power lines, to watch tar for island roads being unloaded from a barge at the town wharf, to see the new dock at the yacht club being laid, and to watch men from a tree service planting trees at a large summer estate, among other visits. Whenever there was a special event on the island, their teacher tried to bring them to watch it.

These simple jaunts were enough to stir children's imagination and arouse stories, poems, and paintings when they returned to the classroom. Older students as well can gain much from local trips — to the sawmill, to look at growth rings on freshly cut logs and observe the work activities of the crew; to the cemetery, to do grave rubbings and look for names of prominent settlers; or to the site of an old homestead, to dig around in the dirt for artifacts. Through these trips around their own community, children learn skills of inquiry and observation and appropriate field trip behavior — a good preparation for later trips to more distant places.

Visits to museums. These are the most traditional of field trips. Most museums, planetariums, and other such non-school learning centers are well accustomed to field trips, and have staff members trained in routines to lead them. They are highly structured learning experiences usually, but the exhibits and displays of a good museum captivate the imagination of children in a way that nothing else can.

Observations of real-world activity. Visits to a pajama factory, a fish processing plant, or a radio station provide glimpses of a world of work and action which fascinate children. They learn to identify specific jobs in a whole process of production or service, some interesting, some boring. Connections between skills learned in school and skills needed on the job become obvious. Students studying transportation might visit an airport or railroad yard. Students studying state government might visit the legislature or statehouse. A biology class might visit a marine science laboratory. At North Haven, students who prepared their own little news-

paper next visited a big newspaper to see the real-life reporters and editors and typesetters. A class which used a small printing press to make copies of books they had written, visited a publisher and watched books being produced commercially. The awareness of how many different working possibilities can be built around a single subject area is an important one for students who are not familiar with a wide variety of career roles.

Historical field trips. A good history-based field trip happens when the students feel not only that they are visiting another place, but — more importantly — that they are visiting another time as well. This can be accomplished only by involving the students in the **experience** of the time to a greater extent than is usually possible in a visit to a museum or historical site. The best example of a field trip back in time taken by North Haven students was a visit to the Washburn-Norlands estate in Livermore, Maine. While visiting the estate, restored to authentic 1840's flavor, students simulated the lives of children of that period. They went to classes in an old-fashioned school, did farm and household chores typical of that time, with girls preparing the meals and the boys following the oxen into the woods to cut firewood. Instead of simply observing a restored historical site, the students lived for a day with the clock turned back more than a hundred years.

Cultural trips. Children in isolated rural towns rarely have the opportunity to see performing artists. Several field trips taken with our exemplary project funds at North Haven were to cultural events not usually seen locally: puppet shows, symphony concerts, live theatre, and mime performances. Schools not endowed with the advantage of federal funds can take such trips just as often, but might have to work harder to raise money for them.

Project-oriented trips. Sometimes students need to take a trip as part of a project on which they are working in order to do further research than would be possible in school. Students preparing termpapers at North Haven, for example, visited the public library in the nearby city of Rockland to learn how to use a card catalogue and to check out books pertaining to their topic. Students in a shop class visited an engineering shop in order to have some necessary metalwork done for a project of theirs. Workers on the school yearbook visited local publishers to discuss printing estimates and to look at examples of book designs. These are all **real** purposes

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for going, and the responsibilities or assignments students have on these trips adds to their involvement in the experience.

Outdoor adventures. Undoubtedly the most exciting part of our career development program at North Haven was the incorporation of environmental adventures into the school program. We organized several trips for students in which they encountered formidable physical, psychological and social challenges in an outdoor situation. A camping expedition to Baxter State Park in Millinocket, Maine, was highlighted by a group ascent of Mt. Katahdin. On another trip, students sailed along the Maine coast in thirty-foot open boats. On still another, junior high students spent a day learning to scale steep cliffs and to maneuver themselves around a frightening rope obstacle course. In these outdoor adventures, students are challenged to accomplish a task which at first seems difficult, if not overwhelming.

From seventh-graders' accounts:

> "I can't do it." Those are probably the four words that popped into everybody's head when we all first saw the rocks we were supposed to climb and the ropes course. Anyone would have to admit that it wasn't the easiest thing to do, but with the help of the counselors we finally made it. The words seemed to change when you finally did finish from "I can't do it" to "I can do anything now!"
>
> — *Ellen M.*

> One thing I thought was pretty neat was that a person is always meeting a challenge. Like one time I had just climbed up part of the cliffs and was supposed to rappel down. Well, from the top it looked pretty far so I said I couldn't do it, but that instructor kept telling me I could do it. So finally I rappelled down, and after I was down I wanted to do it again!
>
> — *Kim M.*

Adventures such as these, as distinct as they are from the standard activity of a school, have a very important function, particularly for students coming from small, isolated communities. One of the consequences of an upbringing in such a community is that young people become accustomed to the routines of their life in their own small world, but rarely face challenges outside that routine. While they become adept at the management of their familiar routines, they do not have the opportunity to become confident in the accomplishment of strange and apparently difficult tasks, particularly if they are faced in an unfamiliar

environment. The "I can't do it" reaction to these tasks is common, and it is one which stands in the way of a student's growth and exploration of the world beyond his or her community. These adventures alone cannot change such an attitude, but the pride and confidence that come from the successful accomplishment of a task which at first seemed overwhelming stay with a student for a long time.

Extended field trips. Sometimes a visit of more than a day is necessary in order for students to gain the full benefit of a place. An example is a visit by rural students to a city, with time to explore the many resources found there. Some non-school organizations, such as environmental study centers, provide educational programs for students for periods of a week or more, often involving a stay in a special camp.

Parent-directed trips. If school staff feel that trips outside of the community have considerable educational benefits, it would be logical that family trips and vacations have the same potential. Teachers may offer to help parents plan activities to maximize the learning on such a trip. A simple "family trip unit" which parents could administer might include following the progress of a trip on road maps, computing gasoline mileage, tabulating trip expenses, recording observations and experiences in a special trip journal, and collecting souvenirs and mementos along the way for a scrapbook or classroom presentation upon return.

Guidelines for using field trips

A field trip can be either one of the richest learning experiences a school can manage, or a major fiasco, depending on how carefully it is handled. Following are some general suggestions, based on our experience using field trips at North Haven with students of all ages.

When to schedule a field trip. There are two ways a field trip may be related to other parts of the curriculum: a teacher may begin with a specific unit and plan a field trip around it, or begin with a field trip idea and plan a curricular unit around the experience. The essential point is that there is a connection between the trip and studies inside the school. Some academic lessons have more real-world applications than others and therefore suggest a

field trip. Some heavier units need the extra motivation of a field trip to help them along. Sometimes a field trip will be taken simply because the teacher senses it is time for one — after several weeks of being shut up in the classroom, for example. A special event to which a teacher wants to bring his or her class might prompt a field trip, or the opportunity to visit a particularly interesting place.

Where to go. Whenever possible, teachers should take their classes to places they themselves have already visited, and where they have concluded there is a potentially good trip. Some of the elements making a place ideal for a field trip are

- a high-interest activity, place or person; a scene which is full of action and fun to observe;
- cooperative hosts who are interested in students and willing to take the time to demonstrate and explain, using words which match the students' age and maturity level;
- a physical space affording safety and good vantage points for all involved;
- an opportunity for student involvement in some way.

Suggestions for places to take students on field trips may be gathered from a directory of community learning resources, from the reports of other teachers, from newspaper articles or television features, from the yellow pages of the telephone directory, or from friends and acquaintances.

Arranging the trip. Many school systems have established their own policies for the management of field trips, and procedures taken by teachers must obviously follow those guidelines. A contact must be made to the people at the site of the proposed field trip. A teacher might describe the objectives for the trip, the size of the class and age of students participating, the length of time desired on the site, and the type of activities desired. The host can suggest the possibilities he or she is able to offer, and between them an arrangement can be proposed for the field trip.

Transportation must be secured. The teacher with a bus driver's license has an advantage if a bus is available, and if school policies allow teachers to drive buses. Costs for the trip need to be tabulated, and a decision made on how to cover them. Administrative approval must be obtained; usually fairly detailed plans need to have been made prior to proposing a trip. Parent permis-

sion slips must be distributed. They should give not only the date and destination of the trip, but also provide a summary of the activities to be undertaken on the trip, and how they will relate to class studies. The slips should provide little details that parents appreciate, such as whether a lunch will be required, how much pocket money is appropriate for the trip, what type of clothing is required, and how the students will be brought home at the end of the day. Parent assistants for the trip should be solicited; this is an excellent opportunity for parents to become involved in a school program, with real responsibilities and a chance to observe the learning which occurs through such an experience.

Class planning and preparation. If the trip is related to a particular lesson in school, students should have considerable background in the subject area around which the trip is organized. It should not be difficult for the class to formulate together questions to be asked on the trip, although having a written list sometimes detracts from the spontaneous exchanges between students and host on the trip: students are so intent on asking the questions on their list that they don't bother to listen to the answers. A more general preparation would be to give students a feeling of expertise in the subject so that thoughtful questions will occur to them as they are on the trip.

Pre-trip activities may also include studying maps showing where they will be going, reviewing materials and information about the site of the trip, the assignment of research, record-keeping, recording, or management responsibilities for the trip.

The trip itself. For a field trip to be worthwhile, it must be enjoyable, and for it to be enjoyable, it must be orderly and well managed. The halls of the state legislature are no place to start laying down rules for behavior. The authority of the teacher and chaperones and the exact standards of behavior must be clearly understood by everyone before the trip starts. Teachers and chaperones must make the obvious checks of attendance, lunches, and money.

Some areas which need to be covered beforehand include whether the group will stay together at all times; whether lunches may be eaten at any time or at a specified time; under what conditions students may spend their money for souvenirs and treats; and what the limits of safe and acceptable behavior at the field

trip site are. A common concern of teachers is getting their students to focus attention on what he or she wants it to be focused on, rather than what might actually be fascinating them. Teachers need to be a little flexible in this regard: attention cannot be forced, and constant efforts to steer conversation around to the pre-established topic might be counter-productive. A study of written reflections on the trip after it is concluded will usually indicate the dominant impressions of the experience. Teachers should not be too upset if lunch at McDonald's was the highlight of the trip; in fact, it makes sense to work around the students' greatest interest. If McDonald's is what fascinates them most, a tour of it should be arranged as part of the trip. For students at North Haven with limited exposure to the mainland, a long school trip was an exciting event. The official destination — a museum, for example — was often only a small part of the whole experience. As they rode on the bus, students were busy watching the countryside roll by. For their teacher to stand up front and attempt to lead a discussion of the trip's academic lessons might be frustrating for everyone.

Field trips often stir children's imagination, particularly visits to museums, old forts, and other romantic sites. It is often a good idea to schedule some time for active play — an opportunity to release pent-up energy and also to express some of the fantasies occurring to them.

One of the most important parts of a good field trip is the organization of activities which will capture and preserve the experience for review and reflection later. A camera is an essential tool for any field trip; a cassette recorder, too, has many uses and is easily packed. Videotape recording equipment provides the best record of the trip, but even portable equipment is cumbersome and requires at least one full-time person to handle it. Students can help with such responsibilities, but teachers must be careful to see that extra tasks do not detract from a student's participation and involvement in the trip in other ways. One of the best records of a field trip we made at North Haven was with a half-frame 35-mm camera. With color transparency film, and when each picture is taken with the camera in the same position, a color filmstrip of the trip may be made. (Developing instructions should specify that the film not be cut or mounted in the processing.)

When the filmstrip was returned to school, students provided a narrative commentary, complete with bells being rung to signal the advance of a frame. Other methods of preserving the trip experience include the collection of souvenirs for display at school, and on-the-spot note-taking by students.

After the trip. Opportunities for follow-up activities to a good field trip are numerous. A "talk-time" with younger students serves to draw out many individual responses and insights. Writing thank-you notes or drawing thank-you pictures are routines with a valuable potential for getting children to articulate what they learned and enjoyed on the trip. With older students, there is a wide variety of writing activities possible. A book of photographs of the trip, combined with students' reports of various episodes of the experience, makes a souvenir which will be treasured in the classroom for years. A bulletin board display of photos and student writing about the trip is another possibility, as well as a table display of items collected on the trip, with descriptions of their meaning and function.

It is important for school staff to keep anecdotal records of trips taken on file for future reference. A field trip directory may be assembled from such records from many teachers. When schools in a region cooperate in such a project, an extensive list of potential field trips in the area can be made — a valuable beginning for the teacher anxious to schedule one.

* * * * * *

The best units are those that use a variety of methods in the teaching of them — at different stages. Many combinations are possible. A field trip may be the perfect follow-up to a unit already taught using other methods; this was the case on North Haven when students visited a book publishing business after having produced books they wrote themselves, on their own printing press. On another occasion, the visit of a nutritionist to the classroom so interested some students that they went to see her at work in a nearby hospital. Field trips also may turn out to be so successful that they lead to other activities around the same theme, using different methods. A visit to a television studio inspired some students to produce their own videotaped program after returning to school.

A word about technique

The preceding suggestions of strategies for teaching are based on what worked well for us at North Haven. They are not Answers. The conclusion we reached through our project, in fact, was that there are no automatic solutions which apply everywhere and with everyone: ultimately it's still people who make the crucial difference. "Correct" technique alone cannot accomplish the results that are best assured by a healthy relationship between student and teacher. The best methods for teaching are the ones which enable that relationship to grow, whatever they are.

Moving Out

old ways and another way

> I was really trying to place myself. I had a lot of insecure feelings. I was asking a lot of questions like "What is it that you really want to do with yourself?" and "Is this where you really want to spend the rest of your life?" and it was pretty confusing.

A young woman approaching her graduation from high school in a small rural community experiences uncertainty about her future plans in ways not nearly so troubling to her urban counterparts. The severe shortage of career opportunities in rural areas, particularly for women, is at the base of the problem. That factor, however, forces another issue: a choice among those options that do exist — in and out of the community — must be preceded by the decision of whether to leave the community. It is the mixture of feelings about that prospect that confuses so many young rural people. They are simply not ready to make that decision in many cases, and therefore cannot make the decisions which follow from it.

Many thoughts preoccupy these rural youths. They are anxious to demonstrate that they have come of adult age; they are closely connected to their family and community and don't want to risk breaking those ties; they are curious about the swinging city life and would like to give it a change; they want to please their parents; and they want to be successful in the eyes of their schoolteachers. These concerns all come together in the single decision of whether to move out of their community, which is what makes deciding so difficult.

At North Haven, a comment frequently heard among older students was, "I can't wait to get off this rock." Ironically, such bravado seemed at times to come as much from a need to identify with island tradition as from a need to separate from it. The uncertainty young people feel about their future plans is often expressed specifically in ambivalence about staying or leaving, an ambivalence which has become a tradition of its own. Some stay, some leave. Before making a final decision, many vacillate.

A common way of resolving this ambivalence is through the arrangement of a short period of life and work away from the home and the community. Such an experience is often taken without really making a commitment to a specific vocational or educational path permanently outside the community; many ties to home are retained. Its primary purpose is to clarify ones feelings about staying or leaving, so that the youths can proceed to make a permanent decision about the future.

> I was getting a little panicky because it was my senior year in school. That was the worst year I've ever spent in school. I had to go, for a little while anyhow, and find out what it was like.
>
> I don't know, I just always had this thing about people getting married, living here, and just getting in a rut. And I wanted to get out . . . I always said I wanted to live on the mainland for a while and eventually I'd want to come back.
>
> I think leaving is good, at least for a while. It changes your feelings about the island, just by being more clear on what it has got for you and what it hasn't.
>
> I want to leave, but I know I'll miss a lot about this place: the quietness, the serenity . . . just not being pressured by outside things, I guess. It's just like one big home.

These feelings of island youths, both before and after out-of-community experiences, are probably typical of young men and women growing up in isolated communities. Only a few leave immediately after high school with no thought of returning; some never leave. Many, however, leave their community after high school, but see the move as a temporary one, made primarily to clarify their feelings of attachment to the community in which they were raised.

It is vitally important that schools in isolated rural areas be aware of this background of students' decision-making. The

teacher or guidance counselor discussing college plans with a student, or working earnestly to place a student in a specific job outside the community, needs to understand the importance of these issues in students' thinking. Teachers may even help to clarify them while the students are in school, rather than leaving the young person to struggle with them alone after graduation.

How it can be done: the alternatives

The youth ready to move away from home for a while has four main options: college, vocational school, the military, or a job in another town or city. Each has its own advantages and limitations.

College. A college environment provides a wide exposure to other young people from other backgrounds within a supportive social atmosphere. Two factors restrict it as an option: the necessity of an adequate academic background to manage college-level work successfully, and the resources to finance it. Both, however, are often more imagined than real. Many youths conclude that college is an unrealistic alternative when in fact they could both handle and afford the challenge. Teachers and parents must often go to great lengths to convince students they could make it in college. Once there, rural youths often find it an enlightening and stimulating experience. For those who are anxious to continue learning, college is a sensible option. For those whose main interest is in getting away from home for a while, it may be a frustrating as well as expensive experience.

Vocational school. A vocational technical institute has the advantage of being more readily accessible to the average rural student than college would be. It is usually less expensive and less stringent in its entrance requirements. It also provides instruction in skills which, regardless of whether they lead to a specific career, have practical applications. It does not, perhaps, provide as varied an exposure to other young people as college might, and may give less support to the whole social life of its students, but it does provide an institutional setting for the encounter of an unfamiliar world, and thereby adds some security to the experience.

The military. A stint in the military service is not only free — it pays. It is open to virtually anyone and offers opportunities for world travel and skills instruction. To a much greater extent than college or vocational school, the military structures the twenty-four-hour life of its recruits in a rigid schedule. Furthermore, the quick escape that is always possible for a homesick student who changes his mind about further education is not permitted in the service. Some students shy away from this option, fearing this loss of freedom, but it continues to be an important alternative for rural youths, particularly those who thrive on the support of an institution behind them.

An out-of-town job. The main distinction of this option is that with it a youth is completely on his or her own, without the security of an institutional attachment. One must usually find ones own job — unless family or friends are nearby— as well as housing, recreation, and new acquaintances. Prior arrangements with friends or relatives which guarantee some of these necessities in advance were made in most instances by North Haven young people. One of the most popular versions of this alternative for North Haven women has been a job as governess or mother's helper. Such a job offers the chance to leave ones own family and community, but also the opportunity to move immediately into another one.

The role of the school: the guidance program

The school has a natural and traditional role in the arrangement of these experiences. It joins the two worlds of Here and Out There. It is located in the community and is ultimately controlled by the community, but it is usually staffed by teachers from outside the community, and maintains many contacts with the larger world. Students look to the school for suggestions and support of ways to move out of the community. The school has a delicate task: it helps students to make out-of-town plans following graduation, because it believes these experiences are important in the process of their maturing, and that they are a natural way to clarify values

and aspirations. But while doing so, the school must be careful not to imply in any way that leaving is ultimately better than staying.

This is typically the role of the guidance department. We were too small at North Haven to have a designated full-time guidance counselor. The guidance program there is of necessity innovative in comparison to other schools, but traditional and sensible in the context of North Haven circumstances. Above all, it is completely personalized. With graduating classes of four to eight students yearly, each senior is the center of a single, self-contained guidance program. It is not "What do we do for the college-bound students?" but "What do we do for Davey?" One teacher at North Haven usually takes a special responsibility for assisting students in this area. Through his relationship with each student, the teacher alternately encourages, prods, and forces the student to think about the coming year. The North Haven-style counselor goes beyond the conventional role; not only does he see that students submit applications and transcripts on time, but he literally leads the student by the hand to the door of the admissions office, military recruiter, or potential employer. His commitment is not to a program, a department, or a service, but to an individual person.

North Haven is obviously an extreme. We did not have the choice of having a guidance department like a regular school. Most rural schools do have that choice, but perhaps they should still consider the North Haven approach. Our guidance program had these characteristic features:

Managed by a teacher, not a professional guidance counselor. It is completely individualized and begins in the personal relationship between a teacher and a student. One teacher attends specifically to vocational issues, but most guidance tasks are shared by all the teachers. Each secondary student belongs to an "advisory" composed of other students from all secondary grade levels. Each teacher has one advisory and is responsible for the guidance of each student in the group. Because a student stays in the same advisory for the entire high school period, his or her advisor can follow progress continually.

Family orientation. In the end, the advice and pressures coming from ones family are probably the most significant factors

in the decision made about future plans. The teacher recognizes this and discusses options with the parents as well as with the students.

Occasionally high-pressured. I am not contradicting the idea that the school should ultimately be neutral in its influence on students' decision making. There are strong forces which must be counteracted, however, in this process — self doubt, for example. A student skeptical of his or her chances for acceptance at an institution (but obviously wanting to go) must sometimes be almost forced to submit an application. The delight shown at the notice of acceptance, and the subsequent self-propulsion, verify the propriety of the initial pressure tactic. Similarly, we often insisted that everyone take S.A.T. exams when they were offered, both to de-mystify the testing situation, and to anticipate the inevitable change of mind.

Frequent trips. Each year most of the juniors and seniors at North Haven, with a teacher, borrow a van and go on a two- or three-day jaunt visiting colleges and vocational schools. This is a leisurely trip, with no effort made to restrict it to those who are apparently considering these options seriously. Former North Haven students at colleges and vocational schools act as tour guides on the campus, if possible, lending a little island-ness to an unfamiliar environment.

In-school presentations. Few schools, if any, are smaller or more isolated than North Haven's, yet recruiters and admissions personnel have always been willing to come out to talk to students informally about the institutions they represent. This is the chance for individual students to ask questions which might not emerge in class discussions.

Counseling is more personal than vocational. For youths in rural communities, the decision of whether to leave the community, and for what reasons, is harder to make than that of which out-of-community option to select, or which job to apply for. This is a personal decision, requiring a clarification of values and identity, and deeper understanding of ones relation to the family. Guidance counseling for these students must therefore have more personal emphasis than it would in the department of a larger, urban or suburban school.

Teachers at North Haven and other small community schools often become personally close to the students. At times the teacher is like a friend to the student. A teacher's house is often the site of gatherings of students. Teachers who leave the community and move closer to an urban center may make their houses — and themselves — available to students away from home, like a halfway stop. When this happens, it is not, of course, by institutional design. Yet it is indisputably an important part of the support students receive in their school experience as they encounter the outside world. It seems to happen more easily and more frequently in rural areas than in urban areas, and is consistent with the idea that the most effective institutional approach in a rural community is the one which is most personal in nature.

A new way is needed

Most North Haven young people who move off-island soon after graduation eventually return. The allure of mainland living is soon lost.

> I thought it was going to be a heck of a lot better than it was. I pictured it to be all fun and games, but it wasn't. I guess I was looking for more entertainment than there was, like going out to movies and out to eat a lot and stuff. But you can't. It's no different from being here, unless you've got loads of money.

What is learned about the mainland is that it is "noisy", "stinky", and, especially, "unfriendly". The pattern is similar for many rural youths: a quick visit to the city is enough to make them appreciate their home community. The move away from home was intended to resolve their curiosities and establish their independence. When that is accomplished, they return.

So what is the problem? Why is a new way of experiencing the outside world needed? It is because the present system of experimenting with life outside the community, as it exists in North Haven and other small rural towns, has dangers and problems which significantly diminish the benefits:

(1) The optional ways of moving out of the community are not always well-suited to the needs of the youth. While college,

for example, is one of the best places for a young rural person to gain a new sense of himself, independent of the influence of family and community, there is a risk inherent in using it for that purpose. Parents and relatives often invest expectations as well as family savings in a youth when they send him off to college. If he chooses to leave college early without a degree — having satisfied the urge that compelled him to go there in the first place, a need to get out of the community for a while — he may choose to drop out of the program early, without a degree or certificate. While his own expectations may have been met, those of his family may not have been, and they may see his decision as an admission of failure. The feeling of having disappointed his family may be a traumatic one for the youth, and may well diminish the self-assurance which should have come from the experience.

(2) Another danger in this customary procedure is that the youths may not be adequately prepared for the challenge of living in an unfamiliar situation. It may seem terribly difficult and unpleasant, and the conclusion that it is not the place for them to be may be premature, based on a distorted view of the outside world and their inability to cope with the experience. That world may not have been given the chance it deserves.

(3) The third problem with this system sounds harsh, but it is real. Rural communities simply cannot afford to have young people return to them who might have been happy somewhere else, had the opportunity to get out been better managed. Employment possibilities in most rural areas are limited. It is probably true that there are sufficient places in many rural towns for the youths who want to stay there, provided they bring energy, imagination, and a positive, enterprising attitude to their lives there. But when their own feelings about themselves and their future are not clear, and when their commitment to their community is marginal, rural youths may not find themselves with much to do.

A better approach to the arrangement of out-of-community experiences is needed to insure that they be appropriate for youth's needs, that they clarify rather than frustrate, and that they be more fun than painful.

The school has an answer: an exchange program

Since most out-of-community experiences come after school is finished, the role of the school is limited. The student intending to go to college will be prepared by his or her school for the academic challenges to be encountered there, but not for the many other aspects of the experience. Once the acceptance notice is in hand, the high school's role is finished. For students certain of what they want, they are probably ready to continue on their own. But for students whose main interest is to get away from home, they are venturing into a period of great decisions and potential growth almost alone.

If an out-of-community experience could come during a student's school program rather than after it, there would be more support — both personal and curricular — possible for it. It could be carefully planned, supervised, and followed up, leaving the student less vulnerable to the vagaries of fate and the all-too-frequent feeling of failure. For some students, such an experiment in living away from home may make a later one unnecessary. For others, it may prepare them better for a later one, so that it will not end early in disappointment and frustration.

What is important is the process of preparation. If students from remote rural areas are to feel comfortable outside of their community, they must learn to see themselves both as members of their own local world and as citizens of various broader spheres. To help the student achieve that expanded awareness is an ambitious aim for a school. It requires not only a good social studies curriculum, but also a comprehensive program beginning in the early grades which makes the out-of-community experience its constant focus.

At North Haven, teachers have had a foundation on which to build such a program in a tradition which has been part of the local school life for over thirty years: student exchanges. The final step in a series of exchange experiences is a long-term solo exchange, in which a student moves alone to another family in another community for several months' duration. While this obviously is not

an alternative for every student, it is one which rural schools could support much more vigorously than they do now. In many ways it is an ideal way to learn the same lessons students have struggled to grasp through the more traditional — but less appropriate — routes out of their hometown.

It begins in a simple two-way process: children are sent out to meet other children in another place, and then those other children are brought in to be met in a familiar place. What is temporarily disconnected in this exchange is the link between who you are and where you live. For children living in isolated communities, that does not happen very often. Field trips are important in this process, but they are primarily an experience of another place, while the student exchange is an experience of other people. In making contact with these other people, students realize that there must be something in them which is independent of their family and community, because that is the one thing they do not have in common with these other kids.

The traditional exchange at North Haven involves all high school students (about twenty-five) going to another community for a week, each hosted by a separate family. Later the host students come to stay on the island for a week, hosted by North Haven students. When the program is repeated every four years, each high school student has a chance to participate. There have been periods when the exchange was dropped from the school program, but many parents who helped plan last year's exchange with Concord-Carlisle High School in Concord, Massachusetts, had themselves been on exchanges to Newton, Massachusetts, or Hackensack, New Jersey, in their own youth.

With this tradition, an important precedent is already made for the association of the school with learning experiences outside the community. Without such a precedent, school staff must work harder to sell that idea. Some parents might be reluctant to see the school become involved in "non-academic" learning. Such a distinction is entirely unnatural, and that point can be made in dozens of ways. As I will illustrate later, opportunities for connections between academic skills and experiential learning abound.

A comprehensive student exchange program is an example of the type of special project most approrpiate for small rural schools. It builds on the inherent strengths in smallness and ruralness, while

at the same time offering students a way to overcome some of the handicaps which accompany rural living. Small schools have many advantages in the implementation of such a program. There are fewer bureaucratic channels through which to seek approval. There is more opportunity for student and parent involvement. It is education which is consistent with the personalized style of learning that is natural in small rural schools. Most importantly, it can be a whole school project, instead of the exclusive activity of the A.F.S. Club or Student Council, one which might involve almost all the students and teachers. Furthermore, an exchange program makes the outside world much realer to youth from isolated areas. It frees them from the too familiar scenario of roles and expectations in their own community. It provides a chance to learn how to make new friends, an experience rural youths rarely have. And for motivated students, straining to move beyond the curricular limitations of the small high school, it is a chance to work at more advanced levels for a while than would be possible at their own school.

Switching Places

the use of student exchanges

Teachers know that when lessons can be taught through an experience, they are most deeply learned. One of the most important experiences rural youth customarily have is the one which takes them away from their family and community for a period of time. With a comprehensive program of student exchanges, rural schools can arrange such experiences for their students, and through them make possible the learning of important lessons about the place of their own community in the larger world, about the lives of other youths their age in comparison to their own, and about some of the opportunities available outside their hometown. Such a program begins with short exposures to people and places just outside their immediate surroundings. It may conclude with a long-term living and school experience in a new family and community at a considerable distance from home — for a solitary student. Every step of the way is under the constant attention and support of the school.

In the primary grades

When children — urban and rural alike — first enter school, they begin to become familiar with people and places outside of their family and home, and find that they have something in common with children coming from other families: they live in the same neighborhood or community. Exploring that neighborhood or

community together is one of the tasks of children in school activities at this time. When they begin to understand their identity in the place they and their classmates share — the community — they are ready to learn that it is not the only community, that other children come from other communities or neighborhoods and consequently go to different schools. It is at this point that student exchanges — as out-of-community programs — officially begin.

Trips to Vinalhaven: Kindergarten through grade 2. It is logical to start with the closest community. For students from North Haven, this means a visit to Vinalhaven, another island community nearby. It is similar to North Haven in many ways; some North Haven children have friends or relatives there, and many have visited it at least once with their family. A school trip, however, provides a much more intimate encounter. The first trip includes some sightseeing, as children notice both similarities and differences in comparison to North Haven: Vinalhaven, too, has a ferry terminal, but it also has a bowling alley and a drug store. About an hour is spent at the school. Prior arrangements are made with Vinalhaven teachers, and the children go in small groups to different classes, where they are brought into activities already in progress. Children from North Haven join children from Vinalhaven playing in the sand, building blocks, doing math papers. An insight coming from such a trip might be, "If I lived on Vinalhaven, this is where I'd be and what I'd be doing."

A half day is probably sufficient for such a trip. Upon returning to school, supplementary activities may provide an outlet for the enthusiasm generated by the trip. A camera and tape recorder are superb tools to keep the experience alive, and children's own written and drawn recollections of the trip help to extend the reflection of it. Letters can be written to the Vinalhaven children, inviting them to visit North Haven.

Grades 3 and 4. At this age, students should be ready for a more formal understanding of what a community is, and may be prepared to make some generalizations about their own community in comparison to a neighboring community. A trip to Vinalhaven at this age, for example, may include some more specific study topics, such as a visit to the granite quarries or the power plant. Contacts with children at the school will be more meaningful. It is helpful to provide a structure which formalizes some personal

relationships between children from the two communities — such as designating a Vinalhaven youngster as a host for each North Haven student. More time may be left for the North Haven children to fit into the routine at the Vinalhaven school, including lunch and recess. Follow-up activities the next day at home may focus on specific observations children made about the other community and discussion of what it would be like to live there, as well as the sharing of stories of new friendships.

One-day exchanges with neighboring schools

Grades 5 through 8. Students in these middle grades have begun to establish some independence, and are ready and anxious to meet kids their age from other towns. They have a clear sense of their community — and of its reflection in themselves — but recognize that they have many other things in common with students from other communities. Summer church camps, sporting events, and contacts with seasonal visitors are giving them their first experiences of becoming acquainted with new people.

The first real student exchanges begin to happen. Small groups of students merely switch places for a day, without other changes in the school's routine. This is not a class trip, as exchanges in the lower grades resemble. Teachers do not need to accompany the students. Parents or teachers can drive a small group of students halfway to a nearby community, where they will meet a group from another town. The students switch from one car to another, and the parents return with the new students. Students spend a day at the school with their designated hosts, then return after school.

If these exchanges are successful, they may be continued so that children have several encounters with students of another community, each building on the confidence and familiarity established in the previous one. Later visits can include special reports or presentations by the visiting students, or focus on special projects in which children from both schools can participate.

Because these exchanges do not involve overnight stays, the arrangements are simple and easy — primarily transportation and

the securing of parental permission and assistance. They can be taken frequently and to a variety of nearby communities. Students themselves can plan such exchanges, to communities where, because of friends or relatives, they have special interests. They should not be seen as days off from school: connections between the experience and the academic curriculum should always be there, from written accounts to photographic or audio reports.

Observations of Stonington Junior High School by North Haven seventh- and eighth-graders:

"They had to go to different rooms for almost every class."

"I saw they had a hot lunch planned for the kids."

"The food didn't taste that good, so there was lots of waste in the garbage can where they dumped it."

"Almost all of the boys' hair was quite short or shaved off. A few had long hair."

"The boys were nice, because they didn't go around batting girls in the head."

"In the science room there was only one small lab table. The teacher told us that he did most of their experiments."

"In math class the teacher asked boys all the questions, except once or twice she asked a girl."

"They had built-in chalkboards and high ceilings like our old Thoroughfare School."

"I noticed the boys and girls were flirting with each other."

"In the school they had pictures of old classmates from the years 1940, 1941, 1942."

Another version of the one-day exchange was carried out by North Haven and Maranacook Community School in Readfield, Maine. Anxious to see their new school and "adventure" playground, North Haven junior high students visited a class of seventh graders at Maranacook while on a two-day trip to the mainland.

In return, the North Haven students invited the Maranacook class to come to North Haven as their guests. They came, and the North Haven students showed them around their school and then took them to the beach, where a picnic and scavenger hunt were held, with students assigned to find things evidencing ecological relationships or biological categories.

An orientation to world-widening should be constant, not just the intent of isolated special events. Dozens of routine occurrences may be used to discuss the out-of-community experience. An example is the attention paid to children visiting school. Often a child will bring a relative or friend to school for a day. After the child is introduced, he or she is often ignored, and might end up spending a rather boring day. An alternative would be to give the visitor a special project to do, or, if he or she seems fairly self-assured, ask him to tell something about where he comes from. In general, such visits should be treated as the special things they are, rather than as an inconsequential aberration of the routine.

Activity-oriented exchanges

One of the most worthwhile exchange programs for small rural schools involves the exchange of student groups for purposes of sharing an activity, performance, or presentation. In large schools, many different activities are happening: students have the chance to see dramatic and musical productions, debates, art exhibits, sporting events. Small rural schools, of course, do not have as many different projects going on at one time. Rather than accept that state of affairs as inevitable, schools can use this situation as another opportunity for exchanges. Students in one school may be working on a play; in another school, a gymnastics exhibition may be planned. It is usually easy to arrange for the schools to exchange the groups for presentations to each other. When each visiting student is paired to a hosting student, the event becomes an opportunity for meeting new kids and learning something about their school and life.

At North Haven, the interscholastic basketball schedule involves overnight stays on the mainland and overnight hosting on the island. Participation in the basketball program — about two-

thirds of the high school students — includes several one-to-one contacts with other students. We have tried to exploit these visits for their greatest benefit, arranging record hops and social events following games. Many friendships between North Haven students and mainland kids have come from basketball trips. Curricular activities can also supplement these visits: journal-writing, the recording of comparisons and observations of other communities, "travel math", or interviewing exercises.

The short term exchange

This is the North Haven specialty, an ideal exchange for a school of our size and needs. Students go as a group to another community for one or two weeks. Because they go together, and because it is for a relatively short period of time, this exchange is less frightening for shy rural youth than an extended one would be. Yet the students all have separate experiences: the idea is to link the visiting student and the host student tightly, so the guest actually lives for a week or two the routine of someone his age from a different place.

North Haven has the advantage of being able to make this exchange the focus of the entire high school program before and after the trip. All but two of the ninth through twelfth-grade students participated in the most recent one. While students at the other end were busy doing assignments in advance, so that they could be released from their classes, North Haven students were all carefully preparing for the exchange, writing reports, making exhibits, compiling student writings about the island, and collecting pictures. It is easier to manage a special curriculum for a whole class than for one or two students, however. Teachers in large schools would be hard-pressed to find the time to prepare special lessons for the few youths who might be leaving for a week in Maine. There are limits, of course, to the size of a group of students going on a short-term exchange; at twenty-five, we were close to it. Any school larger than North Haven — and almost all are — would not be able to make the short-term exchange the focus of its whole high school program, as we did. In some schools an entire grade of students could go together on an exchange. It

could, for example, be a part of the eleventh grade curriculum each year. One section of a grade could go together, with several exchanges being planned each year for different sections. Alternatively, the exchange could be offered as a credit elective, bringing together a group of students regularly before and after the actual trip, for purposes of preparation and follow-up. Clearly, schools of many sizes could build a short-term exchange into their curriculum, with preparation and follow-up activities the business of the whole class.

Our hopes at North Haven in making this exchange a part of the regular program of almost every high school student were:

to put each student in a *different* environment, making it necessary for him or her to adjust to new values, new customs, new pressures, and new traditions;

to get students to *think* — about themselves, the way they do things, to see their lives at home and their community experience from a more objective perspective;

to give students a chance to learn some skills necessary for coping with a new living situation; learning to adapt ones habits, make friends, demonstrate appropriate social manners, etc.;

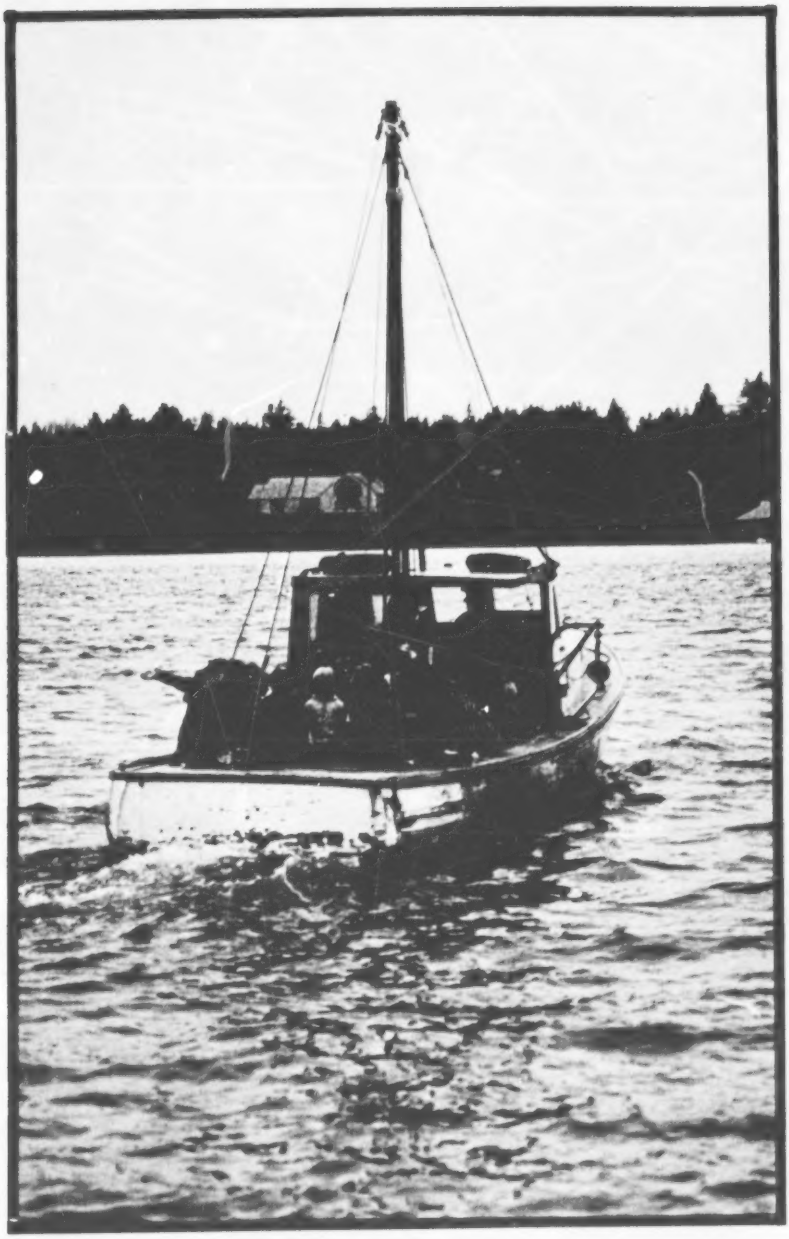
to familiarize students with the life of a large school, to de-mystify the idea of bigness, to enable them to discover how another school works, to encounter different attitudes toward schoolwork and activities specifically and toward education generally (in written evaluations of the exchange, more than half of North Haven students participating in it pointed to their exposure to a "big school" as the most important benefit of the experience);

to reinforce community identity and pride, by having students actively represent their community in programs in the host school, and by giving them the chance to show off their town to people they care about when their hosts come to stay with them;

to make comparative analyses of the economic, social, political, cultural and environmental characteristics of the different communities, and to encourage respect and tolerance for such differences;

to provide an opportunity for the making of friendships and romances which might be continued after the exchange is concluded;

to offer students the opportunity to participate in a *project*, which builds leadership, involvement in the planning and production of a school activity, and promotes cooperation and maturity.



How to do it

1. Securing approval. First comes the idea. It may originate among teachers, students, or parents. Through informal discussion, a consensus should be reached on such issues as Why? for Whom? When? After some research and review of other schools' exchanges, a formal proposal should be prepared to submit to the administration or school committee by the sponsoring organization or the school staff, covering such areas as the grade level for which the exchange is intended, how and when it would be arranged, and for how long.

In some schools this is done by the American Field Service (A.F.S.) chapter, the Student Council, or the P.T.A. Certainly the involvement of students and parents in the program is absolutely essential if it is to be a success, but the teachers themselves should not be too far removed from these responsibilities, if at all. My own feeling is that the exchange experience is so important that it should be part of the official curricular program of the school. No special organization is needed to sponsor the math program. Should the exchange be all that different?

This phase of exchange planning is one of the most important in the determination of success. People are deciding whether to support or resist this idea. It is a time for attention to everyone's special feelings — students, school board members, teachers, parents, and school administrators. One of the most important issues is timing — to whom is it announced first, and in what way is their support and involvement requested? There are no easy answers; people may feel they have been snubbed or bypassed regardless of how carefully they are approached. The best way is to be careful and sensitive to all concerns, even anticipating them when possible.

2. Getting organized. Once approved in principle, a system of organization must be established: responsibilities divided, committees assigned, tasks appointed. At North Haven, general planning of the exchange was done by the staff, with an ad hoc advisory group of parents, students and teachers handling details of its coordination and the arrangement of special activities. Other schools set up an exchange club, with a faculty advisor. Some affiliate with national exchange organizations like A.F.S., with the local chapter handling all arrangements.

3. **Selecting another school.** This is another important factor in the determination of community support for an exchange program; the parents and school board probably want to know where the kids will be going before they agree to it. In other instances it may be a secondary concern. Basically it involves finding a school which wants to exchange with you. There are several ways it can be done. Probably the best is through personal contact with people who are familiar with your community, or at least with your school. If the school is affiliated with a national short-term exchange service such as that provided by the A.F.S. (open also to schools which are not members of the organization), or the National Association of Secondary School Principals, those offices may suggest another community from their files. Some schools might simply wish to advertise themselves as available for an exchange through letters, informational networks, or state education departments.

Some of the considerations to be made: select a community which is different enough from your own to allow students' stereotypes to be challenged, such as a rural-urban exchange. The youth should, however, be enough alike to insure that rapport may be established quickly between them. Unless the school wants to frighten its students into never daring to leave again, it should also pick a place which is relatively healthy and peaceful — where drugs, crime, and other such things are not readily apparent. The other school should ideally have some experience in arranging exchanges. How far to travel depends on your school's finances and the willingness of parents to let the students stray. Pay attention to what other educational opportunities are available — historical sites, industries, museums, or colleges. If the school is to be selected blindly — without the advice of someone your personally trust — it may be a good idea to request literature, yearbooks, school newspapers, or curriculum materials that describe the school system and the community.

4. **Establishing ground rules.** Once a school is selected, agreement must be reached on the basics of the exchange: the dates, which school goes first, the number of students anticipated, the arrangements for hosting, and the activities and procedures expected of each other. A formal proposal including these details may be submitted to the administration or school board if their final approval is necessary.

5. **Publicizing the exchange.** With general plans completed, the school can now publicize the exchange to the students and community. At North Haven it was at this point that parents' and students' involvement was solicited. The program can be introduced in a variety of ways: through an assembly program featuring a slide show of the exchange school or even student and faculty representatives, through notices and descriptive materials sent home with students, or over local media. If the exchange is open to only a selected few, the procedure and guidelines to be used in the selection process should be clarified. If it is for everyone in a specific class or age range, but is optional, the criteria for participation should be announced, as well as the alternative for those not participating in the exchange. If it's required, why and for whom it is required should be explained. At North Haven it was officially optional, but highly recommended that all students participate.

An application to participate in the exchange should be prepared, providing enough information about a student in order to be used as the basis for matching him or her with a host. Some sample questions:

> What hobbies or special interests might you share with an exchange student?
> What do you most eagerly look forward to during the exchange?
> Are you willing, and do you have room, to host a student in your home?
> Would you prefer to be hosted by a girl? a boy? a small family? a large family?
> What activities of a large school interest you?
> What are your plans after graduation?

If only a few students are to be selected from among the applicants, attention to factors such as these are appropriate: academic standing, character, personality, responsibility, citizenship, adaptability, sensitivity, cooperativeness, and leadership potential.

6. **Arranging the logistics.** Once a sign-up for the exchange is completed, parent permission slips and release forms need to be received. Matching of hosts and guests should be completed. Some considerations: Do you want the same host/guest connections on both parts of the exchange? Sex matches — girl hosts girl, boy hosts boy? Age matches — ninth graders host ninth graders? All

students hosted separately, or in small groups? When matching is completed, lists of all students participating in the exchange should be distributed, with addresses, phone numbers, and host/guest assignments. Correspondence can now begin. Arrangements for transportation should be made, and costs should be estimated.

The decision of how to finance the exchange should already have been made. Because it is such a simple arrangement, a student exchange is one of the cheapest programs available to rural schools. Most of the needs are contributed by the family, school, and community. Transportation is the single largest expense, although that, too, can be arranged through volunteers if the exchange community is not too distant. Some expenses for food while traveling, or doing things as a group, as well as admission fees for educational events, might also be included. If the exchange is very well heeled, pocket money for students and staff may also be included. An exchange may be paid for by fees charged to each student participating, through the regular student activities budget of the school, or through funds raised especially for the purpose by the sponsoring organization or advisory committee.

7. Planning exchange activities. In each community, the hosts are responsible for the planning of activities for the visiting group. One decision which must be made early is whether to concentrate on group activities, or to leave more time to the individual host family. To the extent that you want kids to fit into the regular routine of a community rather than a special one for the exchange week, few activities are necessary. Some might be planned to give hosts a chance to show off their community, to provide a time for parents and other community people to meet all the exchange students, and for the exchange students to introduce themselves, their school, and their hometown to the host community. The planning of these activities may be the special responsibility of the advisory group or the exchange club.

One of the school days during the exchange week at North Haven was devoted to an in-depth look at the community. In the morning, the local historical society gave a presentation on island history, with a showing of artifacts. In the afternoon, a short discussion of the island economy led to a look at the three primary means of income for island men: caretaking of summer estates, boat building and other carpentry crafts, and fishing. All

students went on three field trips: tours of summer homes by their caretakers (all parents of North Haven students), with an account of the vocation of caretaking; tours of local boat building shops; and visits to local fishermen to hear of their craft. Other activities planned for visiting exchange students were a boat ride to a nearby island, a clambake on the beach, and a banquet for the community.

8. Preparing in the classroom. The short-term exchange is an experience through which many academic skills and lessons may be learned; that potential is best met by making the exchange the subject of classwork before, during, and after the trip. As a project, the exchange requires careful planning of transportation arrangements, estimating of costs, and the raising of funds. The management of this enterprise is a **real** challenge — not abstract — and when done by students, is an exercise of many skills in math and economics. In our exchange with Concord-Carlisle High School, students prepared several presentations which described the North Haven community. Exchange students are ambassadors from their hometown, and the representation of their community to people unfamiliar with it is an opportunity to incorporate community studies into the pre-exchange curriculum. Some of the projects undertaken by North Haven students in this area for last year's exchange were:

A slide program. Slides showing glimpses of North Haven life were selected by a small group of students and organized into a show. A narration was written for the program, and students chose parts of it to read. The program was shown as part of an A.F.S. night during the exchange week.

Bulletin board display — the island environment. Science students prepared photographs, drawings, and reports describing the flora and fauna of North Haven.

Table exhibit — fishing on North Haven. Several boys who fish for extra income themselves prepared an exhibit including a lobster trap ready for baiting, a diagram and picture showing how lobsters are caught, a chart of North Haven boys' fishing buoys, and characteristic pot buoy colors and identification numbers. Reports and photographs of clamming and scalloping operations were also included.

Table display — student writing about North Haven. Poetry, short stories, newspaper articles, yearbooks, and community-

centered journalistic reports were typed and displayed for Concord students to read.

The table exhibits and bulletin board display were set up for the week, and North Haven students took turns attending to them — a chance for Concord students to stop and meet the North Haven students.

A third possibility for making the exchange a curricular experience is in the opportunity for individualized analyses and reflections. Without turning the students into roving social scientists, teachers may suggest to the students that they make observations about their host, the family, and the community. Some of the questions we listed as possible areas of inquiry:

> How does your host spend his/her day in school?
> How much time does your host spend with his/her family?
> What responsibilities do students take in the management of the school?
> How is the relationship between students and teachers?
> What are some of the roles students can play in the school (bookworm, jock, student leader, artist, musician, greaser, intellectual, etc.)?
> What do students like to do for fun? Where are their hangouts?
> What would be a typical date?

Some students might assemble their observations in a short paper or report. The best method of reflection, however, is to assign students to write regularly in their journal. Teachers may ask students to observe what's happening each day of their exchange, or give them more freedom to write confidentially about whatever they choose. Journal writing is one of the most basic types of writing and brings out the most honest feelings. Finally, teachers may incorporate individual research assignments into the exchange experience, focusing on a particular industry, craft, person, or institution, on environmental studies, or an historical project.

9. **Making final preparations.** A final meeting of students and parents a day or two before the exchange begins should be held, at which time rules of the exchange are explained, the itinerary is reviewed, and a school gift is chosen. Written guides for both the students and the parents are helpful. For students, such guides may include suggestions on what to bring for the exchange, a detailed itinerary, maps of the school and community where they are going, and a summary of the rules and responsibilities of the exchange.

For parents, they might include addresses and phone numbers where students and staff are staying, an itinerary of activities, and the procedures established to handle emergencies.

10. The exchange. Whether adult chaperones are to accompany the students on the exchange is a decision which must be made locally. For most rural youth, a one- or two-week short-term exchange is still a challenging new experience. The support and supervision of teachers or parents is probably worthwhile, though if exchanges are fairly common in a school, and students have taken greater responsibility for them, less may be needed, if any at all. For our purposes, it was important not only to bring some adults along, but to designate one of them with the authority to make necessary decisions in the actual management of the week's activities. The rules the two schools want for the exchange must be decided between themselves. Most important to us was that the exchange student stay with the host student at all times, attending classes and following the host's routine. The tendency we worked hardest to combat — and it is probably typical for shy, rural youths in a strange place — was the inclination to search out ones fellow classmates from back home, to re-group in little clusters where they could re-establish the roles and habits that they lived back home. Some responsibilities are on the host in this situation, of course: to provide activities for the guest which keep him or her busy, and to make the guest feel welcome and a part of the family.

11. The return visit. Generally in a rural/urban exchange, the rural students will be the shyer and more passive of the two groups because of having less experience at making new friends. It may be wise for that reason to have the urban students play the host's role in the first round of the exchange. In the return of the urban students to the rural community, the friendships will have already been established, and hosting will be easier.

The return visit is the same as the first part of the exchange, with the roles reversed. It is when the local community is hosting on the exchange that the advisory committee or exchange club chapter can be most active in coordinating activities. The final activity of the exchange could be a large group discussion or seminar in which the experience is reviewed, discussed, and evaluated. Students could share their feelings from the exchange, their

observations of each other's school and community, and their ideas of what they learned through the exchange.

12. Following it up. After the exchange is completed, participating students will probably be somewhat elated from the experience, wanting to keep it alive, wanting to talk and share anecdotes. This is a good time to ask for some reflective writing about the experience; samples of it, along with excerpts from journal observations, might go into an exchange report which could be mimeographed and distributed to students and parents. An exchange scrapbook might also be prepared, including samples of student writing about the exchange, photographs, souvenirs and mementos. At a somewhat later point, written questionnaires might be distributed to both students and staff, evaluating the exchange and asking for articulation of what was learned through it. For schools not offering the exchange as a classroom activity, all these have to be done independently by participating students. If all the exchange students are together in a single class or classes, follow-up activities can continue well after the exchange is over.

The short-term rural/urban exchange: some thoughts

I visited this fall with several students from Concord-Carlisle High School who had participated in the North Haven exchange, asking them for their reflections on it after several months. The cultural and economic contrasts between North Haven, Maine, and Concord, Massachusetts, are profound. Yet when I asked these students to compare the North Haven/Concord exchange with others sponsored by their school, each — separately — told me, "It was the best." When I pressed them to identify what made it so, they answered, again separately, that it was "because of the kids." As one student said, "Once they warmed up to it, the North Haven kids were completely open, really carefree and enthusiastic."

Many North Haven students came into the exchange shyly, but they were anxious to open themselves to the experience. While a short-term exchange may be one of many school activities a student may choose over the course of a year in a large school, the exchange

was for North Haven kids something that happened once, something they had anticipated for years and would talk about for months afterwards. With such an eager attitude, they had much to offer to the experience, and the enthusiasm which they innocently displayed delighted the Concord students.

One of the important consequences of spending ones youth in an isolated rural community is that the friends one has are to a large extent the friends with whom one has grown up. Once they begin school together, there is little experience of new people. Making friends, however, is a process which, like anything else, must be learned. With less experience at it, rural youths are somewhat less skilled and less confident at it, which is why many seem shy to more cosmopolitan youths. Yet they are eager to make new acquaintances. A new student in a rural school quickly becomes a celebrity, as everyone wants to have a chance to make a new friend. This is what rural students can bring to an exchange: their openness, their enthusiasm soon show through their shyness and make the exchange a real contact between people, not a ritualized exercise in diplomacy.

From the urban youth, rural students can learn how to make friends more quickly and easily. When rural kids return from cities with the conviction that people living in them are unfriendly, it is often because they have not been successful in establishing friendships there. That, however, is as much their responsibility as it is the city people's. Loneliness is probably the hardest aspect of city life for rural youths, and to overcome it they must learn how to make contact with people in unfamiliar places. That requires social courage and self-confidence: the outcome, ideally, of exchange experience.

Not all rural youths reach out to other kids who seem warm and accepting. There are some who do not respond, even in an exchange experience. I doubt it is as much shyness which holds them back as it is laziness, as heavily value-laden as the word may be. In the post-exchange seminar, one Concord girl — responding to some of her classmates' observations of how nice it must be to grow up in such a secure community, where everyone knew and cared about each other — said this about North Haven: "I think it might be too sheltered here. Everything is so easy — there's no challenge to accomplish anything special or go out on a limb; every-

thing is taken care of. Why bother?" It's just as important for rural youth to hear this comment as the one that their openness and enthusiasm made the exchange the best of the year. A secure upbringing may allow you to flourish, but, on the negative side, it can also allow the development of carelessness, passivity, and a lack of leadership and responsibility. When put into another family through an exchange, some students are going to be forced to confront their tendency to not bother making real contact with them. The easiest way would be to sneak out to find ones soul-mates. A well-managed exchange makes such a rendezvous difficult to arrange.

The short-term exchange is just that — short. What can be gained from it is limited. It is not, by itself, the "other way" to have an out-of-community experience; that requires a longer stay, alone. It does provide, however, an idea of the differences between growing up in rural and urban areas. From urban youth, rural youth can learn that making friends is just a matter of building up a little social courage, and that accomplishments happen only when you move a little beyond what is easy and acceptable. From rural youth, urban youth can learn that honesty, openness and simple living may be as joyful as their own driving compulsion to be hip and succesful

The long-term solo exchange

Variations of this idea — sending students one by one out of the community for living and working experiences in another family, in another place — offer some of the most exciting possibilities available to small rural schools, yet they are consistently underused. The long-term solo exchange is an opportunity for small rural schools to overcome two of its most characteristic problems: the lack of perspective felt by rural youths in the contemplation of their lives in their local world, and the lack of opportunities for students who are motivated to do something besides what is possible in their own school's curriculum and with the resources of the local community. The management of such exchanges is a time-consuming task, but here again, rural schools have the advantage in the relatively informal nature of their administration, their access to community support and involvement, and in their smallness, where efficiency is not such a constant obsession.

Exchanges are one of the most practical of all school programs. Basically they are barter arrangements: one school has something it can offer to another school in trade for something it needs. The only difference is that instead of exchanging that "something," the students in need of it are exchanged. This is clearly seen in urban and rural schools. Both have their advantages and should concentrate on exemplifying their own strengths. Most rural students probably excel in rural schools, and city students probably need city schools. But not all rural students are alike, nor are all urban students. Some rural youths would flourish in the stimulating and challenging atmosphere of a large urban school, and some urban youths would find themselves most comfortable in the warm and closely-knit atmosphere of a small rural school. Why shouldn't it be possible to expeditiously exchange such students on a frequent basis, giving each for a few months the chance to enjoy what they are missing at home?

Types of long-term solo exchange

Domestic. This is probably the type with the greatest potential for use in small rural schools. It is the easiest to arrange and offers the most flexible benefits. One student moves in with another family in another community for a set length of time, usually one school term. In return, that student is then obligated to host a student from that community in his home for a term, although the same individuals may not always be involved in both ends of the exchange. The community may be nearby, or it may be in another state. The distance from the home community should depend not only on cost considerations, but on an assessment of how independent the exchanging student may be from his or her local world.

An exchange with another community only fifty miles away may better provide the opportunity to gain a perspective on ones home life than would be possible in an exchange with a school in another corner of the country, where shock and confusion could block and deaden deeper learning. If a student's interest is simply to get away from home for a while, this is probably the best way to do it, and it shouldn't be necessary to go far. In the establish-

ment of this exchange at North Haven, we have focused on schools within a half day's drive, where there has been some prior contact or familiarity. If familiarity is not a necessity, exchange organizations will help to find a suitable place for an exchange, although they do charge a fee for their service.

International. This is the traditional exchange. Selected students are chosen to spend a term or a year in a foreign country, while other students are selected to host foreign students visiting in their community. For this exchange, schools are completely dependent on the arrangements made by one of the international student exchange organizations. Two are most commonly used: A.F.S. and International Fellowship. Few small rural schools can afford an A.F.S.-sponsored international exchange without massive community help; the fee charged for the exchange service alone, excluding such costs as transportation, is now approaching a thousand dollars. A.F.S. is highly selective both in its choice of students going abroad and in selecting foreign students to come to this country. It deserves the reputation it has gained for successful and responsible exchanges. International Fellowship offers exchange services closer to the means of small rural schools. They charge one fee for both the service and the costs of the exchange, and are more flexible in their screening of applicants.

There is no substitute for the rich experience provided by an exchange in another country. Similarly, the visit of a foreign student to ones school, particularly if it is in an isolated rural community, provides an opportunity for introducing another cultural reality to the scene. But for many students, especially rural ones, an international experience is too much too soon, and may, in fact, lead to less profound moments of learning than would be possible in an exchange closer to home and more understandable.

Subject-oriented. This is a special domestic exchange, where students go to another school with a specific learning objective. Each school and community has special learning resources, and by opening them to students from other communities, the range of possibilities is greatly expanded. A New York student who wants to learn how to go lobster fishing more than anything else, or how to build a boat, could come to North Haven for a term and learn those skills. Meanwhile, a North Haven student whose driving ambition is to work on a radio station could arrange for an exchange

experience in a school large enough for the students to have their own radio station. A rural student with considerable talent and interest in music could arrange an exchange with another family where there is great support for musical pursuit, while a member of that family may be arranging an exchange with a farm family, for the opportunity of working with animals and learning some farming skills. The possibilities are endless for such exchanges, and being a part of a network where they are advertised greatly expands the learning opportunities for students in small rural schools with specific motivations. This is not a dream; the American Field Service has just such a program underway, and participation in it is not limited to those schools with expensive international programs through the chapter.

Internships. Similar to the subject-oriented exchange, this experience would provide a student with a living and working experience with a specific objective: the difference is that it would not necessarily be in school. Just as many schools now allow students the opportunity for extended learning projects outside of the school, this type of exchange would extend that to projects not only outside the school, but outside the community. The student from a small rural town who was passionately dedicated to animals could arrange to spend a term living in a community where there is a zoo, working full time for that term in the zoo under the supervision of trained zoologists, for example. Again, A.F.S. now has such a program in operation.

Implementation and accreditation. Procedures for these exchanges vary from school to school. Domestic exchanges can probably be easily arranged by mutual agreement between schools already familiar with each other. Other types probably require a broker agency, such as A.F.S. Probably the most important element in the management of such a program is the process of selecting students for the exchange. This is a different experience from the short-term exchange, and only those students should be selected who are ready for the challenge, who are mature and responsible enough to handle a new situation, and who could genuinely benefit from it. There are several ways to accredit exchange experiences. Schools could ask students to continue working in the materials and classes from their own school, on a correspondence or self-directed basis. They could also ask that the student formally

enroll in classes at the exchange school, and be evaluated and accredited on the basis of their performance in those classes. Perhaps most sensible is to design a special curricular package for the exchange, whereby students receive credit for the exchange by completing a variety of exchange-related assignments, from a daily journal to the preparation and presentation of programs both in the host school and in the home school upon return. International exchanges, where students learn a language and something of the history and culture of their host country, and exchanges with specific learning objectives, could be accredited on the basis of the actual skills learned in the exchange — such as their proficiency in the foreign language.

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Even a comprehensive exchange program such as that outlined above is not meant to influence a student's decision to stay or to leave. It is quite likely that this decision is made on the basis of deeper factors than are affected by a temporary living experience away from home. The real goal of these exchanges is to convince rural youths of their own self-worth, and to give them a sense of legitimacy in whatever decisions they ultimately make.

It's O.K. to Stay

the hometown option

As I sit on my porch I hear the sounds of early night.
It's about quarter of seven, and I can hear the woodcock over in the field beeping and fluttering in the air.
I can hear the seagulls over on the bar.
I can hear the ducks quacking down in the pond.
I can hear a stream running down by the road.
I can hear a flock of geese fly over, honking in the dark.
I can hear Paul Waterman going up the stretch out by the barn.
I can hear the wires on the poles down by the road.
I hear the fog horn out on Goose Rock.
I hear the bell out on the back side of Stimpson's Island.
If I want to and if I'm real quiet, I can hear just about whatever I want.

— **Paul H., age 14**

That country life is appealing to an increasing number of people is evidenced by the growing influx of former city dwellers into quiet rural areas. The values inherent in the choice of a lifestyle which is close to the earth, close to family, and close to ones community are traditional, though they have been neglected in the modern American dream of higher and higher status through education, occupation, and material possessions. Now that these simple values are being reaffirmed, what is the stance taken by schools in rural areas as they guide students in the planning of their futures? Many seem to be lagging, not yet fully acknowledging the merits of a decision to stay behind while others move on to seek their fortunes Many school administrators, for example, point pridefully to high

percentages of their graduates going on to college, as though that proves the excellence of their learning program. Aren't they really saying, "Our students are choosing the best futures, therefore we must be a good school"? But by what right can they make such a brash claim?

A school has no business attaching greater prestige to some futures than it does to others. Yet there is a common tendency in those rural schools which aspire to be like city schools to make light of the option of settling down in ones hometown after graduation. The student who makes that choice becomes a dropout from the educational program, even though he or she may finish high school and go through graduation. Such a student has dropped out of the stream of young people moving away from the community. As the school is sometimes a sorting machine, these students seem to be its rejects, having chosen an alternative hardly mentioned in the career education program.

School has a powerful force in a young person's life. If a student feels that it is frowning upon his or her choice of careers, it will inevitably diminish their sense of self-worth. Students who elect to stay in their hometown often do not get a fair deal; they should have as rich and relevant a school program as those bound for college.

It is true, of course, that many students don't know what they will be doing until they are forced to make a decision. The school must vigorously support all alternatives. Because of its special position in and out of the community, it has a special responsibility to advertise those out-of-community options which are less supported elsewhere in a youth's life. But in so doing, it must be careful to see that this does not become a bias, that it does not hint that distant options are better than local ones. To guard against such an implication, rural schools must make an effort to upgrade the local alternative and do a better job of preparing students for its unique challenges.

Teaching community appreciation

The first priority for schools working to have a more positive attitude towards the local life is to make community studies a part

of the curriculum. Opportunities abound for using real-life examples to enrich lessons in every subject area. Practical math assignments can include experiences in measurement and mapping in the community, as well as trips to local enterprises where students can observe people doing math work as part of their daily routine. Natural science activities around a pond or in the woods or a meadow are more meaningful than laboratory experiments and discussions. History units have a special impact when it is ones own town that is being studied. Hundreds of language arts activities can be designed around the observation and description of local experiences.

Teachers not themselves from the local town are limited in the extent to which they can get children to appreciate their own community, however. The best way is by backing out of the picture, by helping to arrange contacts instead between the students and those best able to teach them about the community — their neighbors, aunts, uncles, or grandparents. The best-known example of this technique comes from rural Georgia, where a teacher who was having trouble maintaining his students' interest in Shakespeare finally assigned them to go out and interview their older neighbors and grandparents, with the idea of collecting stories of local crafts, tradition, and folklore — rapidly and permanently being forgotten. The result: the **Foxfire** series of magazines and books, with several million copies sold.

In the elementary grades, teachers can invite people from the community to come into school to talk about how things used to be, relating stories from their childhood, demonstrating skills or crafts they learned (and could still teach), and telling students about their own ancestors. Better yet, teachers can take their classes to visit such people where they live and work, to see firsthand something they might otherwise have missed. Teachers cannot teach this material themselves, but they can see that it gets taught.

The **Foxfire** idea is simple and can be adapted to almost any grade level. A North Haven, a junior high unit on biographies was taught from this perspective. After reading several short library biographies and a class discussion on this literary genre, each student chose a local adult on whom to write a biography. As a group they prepared a list of "personality questions" which would elicit biographical information about their subjects. With each

other, the students practiced interviewing techniques. As a final preparation, a special guest was invited into the classroom for the students to interview together. Then, armed with tape recorders, pads and pencils, the intrepid cultural journalists went out to preserve history. It was the most popular unit of the year. Here was a project that put them in an important position, with their own relatives and neighbors the topic of their study. The interviewees seemed to enjoy the attention as much as the interviewers enjoyed questioning them. The day after a seventh grader interviewed him, a man stopped by the school to find the girl and add details about his appendix operation of fifty years previous, which he had forgotten to mention the first time.

In high school, students can carry such projects even further. At North Haven three girls wrote an extensive article on the island's general store and the family that has run it for three generations. It was published in a special bicentennial issue of **salt**, a magazine published by high school students in Kennebunk, Maine, much like the **Foxfire** books in Georgia. Its careful preparation lasted several weeks, and the group received credit through their English classes for the effort. The project was so popular and well-received that more students were recruited the following year, and an elective in cultural journalism was created. Their task was to write a community profile for a special section of the school yearbook, the first one being a story on a quiet fisherman's wife who handcarved exquisite coastal birds for sale in gift shops throughout New England. For schools of our size, the publication of a magazine like **salt** or **Foxfire** is probably too great a task. The school yearbook, however, is a good beginning for community-based writing; such a section of the book makes it more meaningful to the many townspeople who buy it each year. Another possibility is the local newspaper, usually anxious to publish a well-written feature on an interesting topic, especially if it is by a student. The important thing is to publish — this is writing about real people, for a real purpose: stories may be told for the last time. One piece painstakingly prepared for everyone to read is worth a dozen done more amateurishly for a class assignment.

When students themselves become involved in the preservation of local traditions, they feel more deeply and pridefully their identity with them. By making the description and study of the

community heritage the content of language arts and social studies classes, the school switches its focus from abstract, nationalized concepts to immediate ones; it is acknowledging that the community does exist and is worth something, not a place to be forgotten and left behind. Schools can further this theme by providing opportunities for thoughtful analysis of the question, should I leave or should I stay? Sociology classes can focus on communities and make comparisons between social problems in rural and urban areas. Many students' ideas of the basic differences between cities and rural communities are vague. The most frequently mentioned reasons for avoiding cities seem to be pollution and crime. An interesting project might be to find thoughtful answers to the question of why people choose to live where they do.

Identifying the challenges in the local option

Schools continually impress students with the challenges inherent in many careers requiring further training or education. They do not do as well in helping youth recognize the many challenges possible in a future in ones hometown. A school curriculum which is supportive of staying home will not suggest it as the easiest of ways, but as one with many opportunities for imaginative action and involvement.

Most small rural towns face a future which is uncertain at best. The centralization of economic activity and the reduction of small farms and businesses are resulting in fewer and fewer employment opportunities. For rural youth, the prospects for a prosperous and secure future in their hometown are dimmer each year. The profound task facing town planning boards is how to arrange their town's economic survival in the years to come. Simultaneously the consolidation of political authority at the state and national levels has left rural people with less control over their own lives. Those who accept responsible positions in the town government soon discover they face a real struggle in the representation of their community through an increasingly complicated morass of entanglements.

Schools in these small towns now need the active support and involvement of community people more than ever if they are to retain their traditional strengths and positive spirit and not slip into the depressed and defeatist mood of an institution trying to be something it is not and never can be. Finally, as the power and influence of mass media is broadened, the growth of a mass culture accelerates while quiet local histories and heritage are forgotten.

Against this backdrop of struggle and challenge, the decision to stay in ones hometown is hardly the easiest of all alternatives. It represents an option replete with a need for commitment, dedication, and hard work, if it is to be fully experienced. Far from taking it lightly, teachers in rural schools can encourage their students to consider the possibility of staying in town as an exciting one for which they might be especially prepared.

Skills for hometown living

Specific knowledge and skills are appropriate for this alternative. Students should be thoroughly familiar with their community's historical and cultural heritage. They should know how the community has worked in the past and how it works now — the roles of the planning commission, the selectmen, the various town committees, and the school board. They should understand the situation of the community — how people have made livings in the past and the extent and ways that this is changing, the economic and political issues facing it now and in the future, and some possible paths of community development. In short, they should have the knowledge necessary to be an informed, responsible citizen.

North Haven is one of the few remaining New England communities to carry on the tradition of the Town Meeting Day, when all business stops and everyone goes to discuss and vote on community affairs. (Other communities continue to hold town meetings, but usually at night, and without stopping other business.) Social studies classes in school prepare for this day by studying the town report and the warrant for the meeting

together. They discuss the articles to be voted on and the issues behind them, the offices to which people are elected at town meetings and the responsibilities they carry. Then, as a class, they attend the town meeting, those of adult age voting, the rest observing. For deeper study, students could research a particular issue, articulating the issue itself, and suggesting various ways it could be resolved. Another method of involvement may be for the students together to take a stand on an issue and then work actively for it. In such a potentially controversial situation, it is all the more important that students arrive at their position by themselves and be willing to take the responsibility for it.

It is through action that the skills necessary for effective citizenship in a rural community are learned. Uppermost in importance are the abilities to assume responsibility, organize, and take leadership. There often seem to be enough people with enough time for a community project, but just as often a shortage of those willing to take responsibility, organize the work, and demonstrate some leadership. As people have become more materially secure and government and big business have begun to make more of our decisions, the result has been that people have had less responsibilities of their own. From childhood on, students have many hours free and without significant demands placed on their time and energy. Traditional chores had a function in the development of working skills. Children many years ago had real responsibilities in their families, such as hauling wood, caring for animals, cleaning, or cooking. The welfare of the family depended on their completion of these tasks, and they knew it. Without a substitute for them today, it is not surprising that youth have less self-discipline and a harder time accepting responsibility. The paradox is that at the same time that rural communities are facing the most critical periods of their existence, they also have the greatest shortage of responsible involvement from their citizens.

At North Haven we attempted to make the teaching of responsibility part of our school program through the arrangement of service projects for our students. It began in elementary grades, where each child had a task to do each day. Descriptions of the jobs were posted, and assignments were made on a rotating basis. They ranged from putting puppets back in their box (for a young child) to caring for the school flags and managing the primary

library — jobs for older elementary students. In the high school, each student had to complete four school service credits in addition to the core and elective credit requirements for graduation. A service credit was received for the satisfactory performance of a specific responsibility in some area of the school's operation. Examples of service projects chosen by students were:

Darkroom assistant
Audio-visual aide
Gardener
Vocational aide
Lab assistant
Teaching aide
Custodial assistant
Secretarial assistant

Each project was based on a contract between a student and faculty advisor detailing the responsibilities of the student. A written evaluation of the project accompanied the student's term report.

These were real responsibilities. We were too small a school to have a librarian, an audio-visual person, a file clerk, or someone to care for school plants. We relied on students for these tasks. They were natural needs of the institution. By taking some of the responsibility for meeting them, students felt more ownership of the institution and probably less alienation from it. Other schools might go further and require a community service project to encourage youth to take responsibility in the community.

Another activity which has been used at North Haven to encourage student responsibility has been the school meeting, a copy of the traditional town meeting. Like its model, a school meeting must be announced in advance, with articles for discussion or action posted for all to read. Students themselves can initiate such a meeting if they choose. Officers for the meeting are elected, and traditional town meeting rules are followed. The extent to which a school staff is ready to give authority to students through such an arrangement varies according to their own willingness to surrender it, and their perception of the students' maturity.

An important point to be understood is that there is not a direct relationship between the amount of responsibility given to students and the rate at which they learn to accept it. Like other skills, the ability to take responsibility is learned, and it is learned

in stages. Like other learning processes, it relies on a student's belief in himself or herself: one can learn only as fast as one is convinced one can. Experiences of failure diminish a student's self-confidence and retard the learning. Too much responsibility forced too soon on students may cause them to feel they can't take it, and that belief will slow the rate at which they are learning to take it. Responsibility needs to be given in doses, with each experience of responsibility building on the confidence gained in the previous one.

Crucial to the success of such ventures as student-run school meetings is the taking of leadership. Schools can also promote the learning of these skills by giving attention and support to activities and organizations which are managed by students. Enterprises such as the school yearbook — requiring negotiations with printers, advertisers, and the school staff, the supervision of fellow students, and contacts with townspeople — promote leadership, as does the assignment of responsibility to individual class officers, or the student council. In small rural schools, students quickly learn that if they want something done, they had better be prepared to take some initiative in doing it themselves — the teachers have too many other disparate responsibilities. A school committed to the development of leadership skills will accommodate such initiatives to the greatest extent possible. Extra-curricular student activities also provide youth with valuable experience in organization and management and with savvy in dealing with people and institutions outside their community — skills which can be applied in community work later. Student exchanges, for example, require considerable organizational groundwork in which students can share.

If students are to head directly from high school into the work force in their local community, the one thing they would probably appreciate most from their school is the opportunity for training in a skill or trade which can be used in a job in town. Vocational educators need to be certain that included in their programs is training for trades available locally. The less regionalized vocational education is, the more responsive it can be to communities' job training needs, since they vary so much from community to community.

Because of our isolation, North Haven students did not have access to a regional vocational center. The vocational program we offered in our small school was very limited, but we tried to make it focus on what opportunities existed in our own community. A part of it was a course in boat building, taught by a native craftsman. This is one of the few crafts on North Haven in which there is a demand for skilled workers. While our course could be only an introductory exposure to this craft — the only way to learn boat building is through an apprenticeship — it did provide instruction in basic techniques, and led to the successful construction of a twelve-foot lapstraked skiff.

The traditional way to learn a trade in a rural community is through an apprenticeship, and it is probably still the best in spite of the millions spent on regional vocational education centers. Through cooperative education programs, schools can arrange apprenticeships for their older students who have identified both a trade for which they would like to be trained and a person who could train them. In small rural schools where not more than a few students at the most have an avid interest in a particular vocation, apprenticeships are definitely the most practical of training methods. Through such a program, students learn not only a trade at the side of a person who has practiced it all his life, but also the proper attitudes and habits required on the job. Just as academic education seeks to inculcate disciplined thinking and careful study habits, cooperative education teaches job discipline and the importance of such things as punctuality, personal cleanliness, and thoroughness. Another advantage of apprenticeship-based vocational education is that it permits a school to set up training programs for occupations which may exist nowhere else but in its own community. This is a common situation in geographically isolated areas, where there may be a unique need for wilderness guides, for example, or a particular craft not practiced elsewhere. The school can seek out such unique trades and make its vocational curriculum supportive of staying in that community by offering an opportunity for training there.

Probably the most exciting and innovative of ideas in community-oriented vocational education are found in schools where students have established and manage their own businesses — not pencil and candy stands in the hallways, but actual corporations,

with budgets of several thousands of dollars. Prototypes of such projects have grown out of the **Foxfire** venture in Georgia and **salt** in Maine, both of which have led to student-run corporations with diversified interests. The Foxfire corporation is now marketing films, recordings, and books on the crafts and traditions of their region; salt, inc., has moved into the boat building business. If small communities are to thrive, and if rural youth are to find comfortable and satisfying positions in them in the future, an imaginative attitude toward the finding of alternative ways to make a living is necessary, combined with practical experience in the administration of a business or the marketing of special crafts or skills. It is exactly this combination that student-run businesses are achieving.

What about rural students who don't know what they want?

The suggestion of two themes in a rural school's curriculum — one focused outward, the other inward — does not mean that these are "tracks" in the school's program, each leading to a different result, nor does it mean that students must decide early in high school what they want to do when they graduate. A good rural curriculum must be built on the assumption that students will change their minds. It must have built into it preparation for several options. For schools as small as North Haven, this is not much of a problem. We were so small that, while we offered a variety of courses, there were never very many choices at one time, and it usually ended up that most of the students within a group were taking the same subjects. Just as almost all of the girls in high school played basketball, they almost all sang in the chorus, and they usually chose the same electives.

Everyone prepared for and attended the town meeting, just as almost everyone was urged to take S.A.T. exams and to participate in domestic exchange programs. For those who do decide early what they want, it is always possible to establish particular programs: for those clearly intent on staying, a combination of service projects, community studies, and an apprenticeship is a

solid preparation. For someone convinced that he or she wants to leave, advanced independent study and exchange programs can support that option. What is essential is that teachers try to anticipate the possibilities their students face, and take care to see that there is support for each, somewhere in the curriculum. Regardless of what students ultimately choose to do, they might be able to look back on some moment in their high school experience and say, "That led to this."

The Teacher

The key ingredient in a good school is good people. When there was a vacancy on the teaching staff at North Haven, much effort went into finding a new person who was "right" for the job. Our ideal teacher was one who had as many of the following characteristics as possible:

1. **Positive personal traits.** In the informal atmosphere of a small rural school, ones personality not only shows through in ones performance, it determines ones success. A good rural teacher must, above all, be a good person: emotionally mature, sensitive, honest, straightforward, and self-assured.

2. **Willingness to listen and learn.** People in country towns have seen many teachers come and go, each with his or her own idea of what the students or community needed. The teacher appreciated by rural people is the one who is more intent on listening to them and learning the local traditions and values than on expounding theories or trying to remodel the entire educational program. The school is the community's, not the teachers', and a successful teaching experience in a rural town must begin with that understanding.

3. **Flexibility.** The rural teacher must be a generalist, able and willing to teach a variety of subjects if necessary, anxious to use an interdisciplinary approach in problem-solving, and ready to cope with informality.

4. **Creativity and ingenuity.** One of the "givens" in a small rural school is a sparsity of resources and materials. The smart rural teacher will learn to use the community as a learning resource, and will be ready to create curricular materials of his own when necessary.

5. Cooperativeness. In a small school it is impossible to operate on a basis of self-contained classrooms with autonomous teachers. Cooperation and a team approach are necessary if the school as a whole is to be healthy and strong.

6. Commitment to the community and to rural life. One of the reasons we looked beyond the professional data appearing on a candidate's resume was that we were not only hiring a teacher, we were also inviting a new person into the community. It is important for a rural teacher to feel relatively comfortable with community values, to be open to joining the community, and to be personally committed to a rural way of life. Someone who enjoys close family life and has hobbies such as gardening or farming will be happier in a rural school than the person who depends upon an exciting night life or fancy restaurants for entertainment.

7. Ability to survive and be happy. Most of all, rural communities need teachers who will stay, and be happy staying. The young idealist who tackles a teaching job with furious zeal, only to leave a year or two later, frustrated, tired, and cynical, contributes less to a community than a calm, self-controlled teacher who knows his or her limits and is careful not to exceed them, leaving plenty of time for outside-of-school activities. There is so much that needs to be done; but the good teacher must also know how to occasionally walk away from it.

I am reminded of our attitude towards staff development at North Haven. We had one afternoon a week set aside for meetings and administrative tasks. We sometimes arranged in-service programs for those afternoons, feeling separated from other educators. But I doubt we had as many as we could have, and never seemed to appreciate them as much as we should have. Our reactions to suggestions on how to improve our school was similar to the reply of the old New England farmer to the young man trying to sell him an encyclopedia of farming: "Hell, mister," he said, "I'm only farming half as good as I know how to now."

Particularly in rural schools, it is more often a lack of spirit, will, and energy than a lack of ideas that slows a teacher down. When that happens, the most important thought is not to get discouraged. Don't be too critical of yourself, even if you're not using the most modern approach. It's better to be happy than to be hip.

Resources

Following is a list of resources encountered through the North Haven Project. It is not complete by any means, but should suggest some places where Maine teachers might begin to look for help in revitalizing their schools.

Rural education: an overview

Materials:

Education in Rural America: A Reassessment of Conventional Wisdom, Jonathan Sher, ed. Westview Press: 1898 Flatiron Court, Boulder, Colorado 80301.

Strengthening the Small Rural School, Everett D. Edington. National Educational Laboratory Publishers, Inc.: 813 Airport Boulevard, Austin, Texas 78702.

Promising Practices in Small High Schools, Vol. I and II. Document Reproduction Service, Educational Resources Information Center (E.R.I.C.), National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202.

My Country School Diary, Julia Webber Gordon. Dell Publishing Co., New York.

Organizations:

Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, New Mexico State University, Box 3 AP, Las Cruces, New Mexico 88003.

Oregon Small Schools Project, Oregon Department of Education. Salem, Oregon 97310.

People United for Rural Education (P.U.R.E.), Route 3, Box 41, Alden, Iowa 50006.

Career development for rural students

Materials:

Beyond Happily Ever After: A Career Development Curriculum for Rural High School Students. OPTIONS Project, Department of Education, Dartmouth College, Hanover, N.H.

The Original American Early Morning Primer: A How-To-Do-It Guide for Implementing Career Education in Rural Schools. Career Education Project, Cashmere School District, Cashmere, Washington 98815.

Career Education Handbook for Rural School Administration, Everett Edington, E.R.I.C., National Institute of Education, Washington, D.C. 20202.

Organizations:

Clearinghouse on Career Education, The Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210. Toll-free Hotline 1-800-848-6560.

Small Schools Career Education Project, American Association of School Administrators, 1801 North Monroe Street, Arlington, Va. 22209.

Experience-Based Career Education Project, Greeley High School, Cumberland, Maine; Roy Bagley, Director.

Guidance, job preparation, and placement

Materials:

Rural America Guidance Series, The Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio.

A Step-by-Step Guide to Job Placement, Susan Miller, Mt. Ararat High School, Topsham, Maine 04086.

Making a Life, Making a Living: A Manual for Going to Work. Carl Helms and Susan Miller, Biddeford School Department, Biddeford, Maine 04005.

Organizations:

Career Opportunities Placement and Evaluation Program (C.O.P.E.), Biddeford School Department, Biddeford, Maine 04005; Carl Helms, Director.

Job Preparation, Placement, and Follow-up, Lewiston High School, Lewiston, Maine 04240; Jim LaRouche, Director.

Community studies

Materials:

Using Our Communities, Casey Murrow. Community Studies Research Project, Box 156, Marlboro, Vermont 05344.

You and Aunt Arie: A Guide to Cultural Journalism, Pamela Wood. IDEAS. 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

Moments: The Foxfire Experience, Eliot Wigginton. IDEAS, 1785 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.

salt. Kennebunk High School, Kennebunk, Maine 04043.

Staff Development Program for Promoting More Effective Use of Community Resources. The Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Organizations:

Community Studies Project, Kennebunk School Department, Kennebunk, Maine 04043.

Maine Studies Curriculum Project; Dean Bennett, Director. Gardiner Junior High School, Gardiner, Maine 04345.

Field trips

Materials:

Yellow Pages of Learning Resources: A Guide to Any City, Any Town, Richard Wurman, ed. The M.I.T. Press, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Afoot in Maine: A Guide to Maine's People, Places and Events. American Association for University Women.

Using Field Trips. Staff Development Program in Promoting More Effective Use of Community Resources, The Center for Vocational Education, The Ohio State University, 1960 Kenny Road, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

Student exchanges

Materials:

A New Adventure: Domestic Student Exchange Programs, Jerry Jeffrey. National Association of Secondary School Principals/Office of Student Activities, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

Bring Home the World, Stephen Rhinesmith. American Field Service, 313 East 43rd St., New York, New York 10017.

International Exchange Student Program, International Fellowship, Inc.

Organizations:

American Field Service, 313 East 43rd St., New York, New York 10017.

International Fellowship, Inc., Genesee Building, Suite 825, Buffalo, New York 14202.

National Association of Secondary School Principals, Office of Student Activities, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091.

Using artists in the school

Organizations:

OUTREACH Program, Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities, State House, Augusta, Maine 04330.

Treasure Hunt Associates, Wiscasset, Maine.

Environmental education

Materials:

Acclimatizing: A Personal and Reflective Approach to a Natural Relationship and *Acclimatization: A Sensory and Conceptual Approach to to Ecological Involvement*, Steve Van Matre. American Camping Association, Bradford Woods, Martinsville, Indiana 46151.

Ten-Minute Field Trips — Using the School Ground for Environmental Studies, Helen Ross Russell. Doubleday: Chicago.

A Resource Guide to Outdoor Education in New England, Elaine Barger and Will Phillips, editors. Appalachian Mountain Club, 5 Joy Street, Boston, Massachusetts 02114.

Organizations:

Acclimatization Experience Institute, 5B Indian Ridge, Yarmouth, Maine 04096.

Chewonki Foundation, Wiscasset, Maine 04578; Harwood Ellis, Jr., Director.

Maine Audubon Society, Gilsland Farm, Old Route 1, Falmouth, Maine 04105.

Adventure education

Materials:

Teaching Through Adventure; A Practical Approach. Project Adventure, Box 157, Hamilton, Massachusetts 01936.

Organizations:

Chewonki Foundation, Wiscasset, Maine 04578.

Hurricane Island Outward Bound School, Box 429, Rockland, Maine 04841.

Project Adventure, Box 157, Hamilton, Massachusetts 01936.

Project U.S.E., Harrison, Maine 04040.